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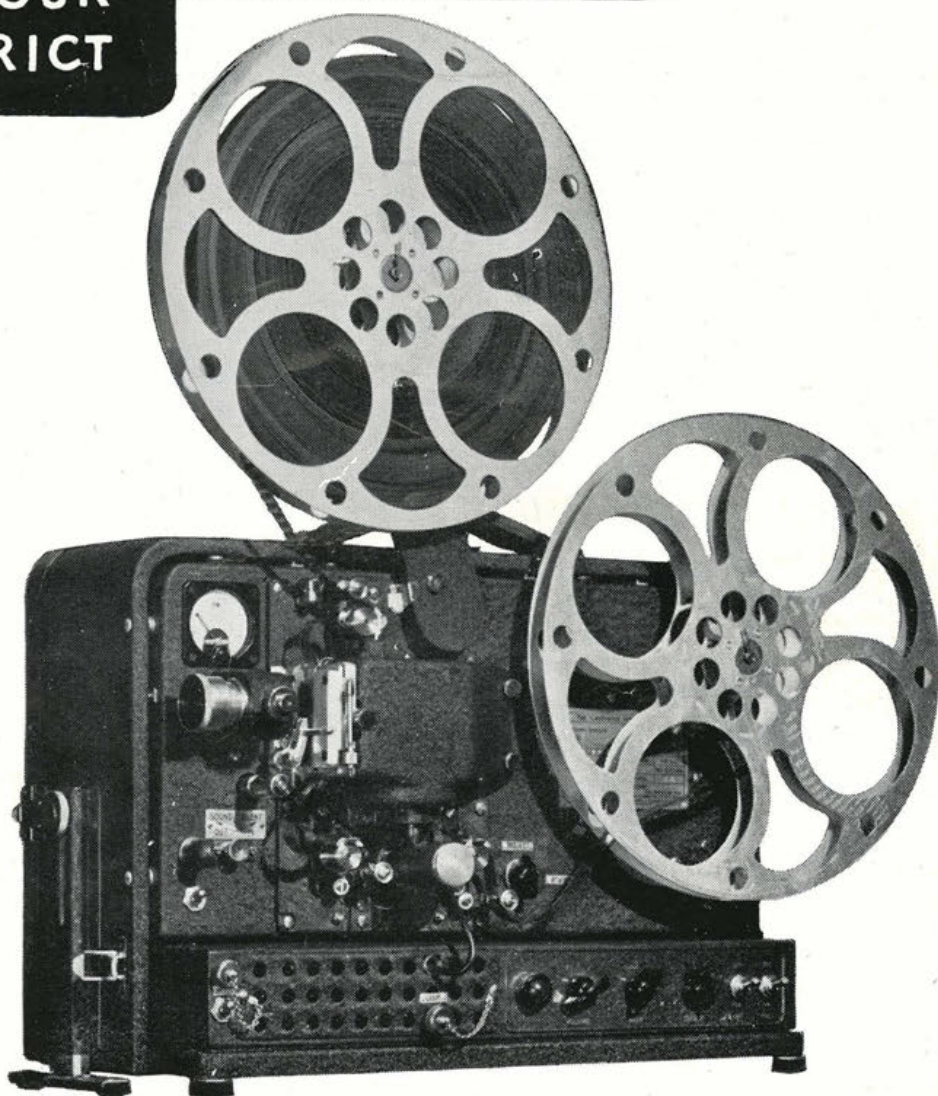
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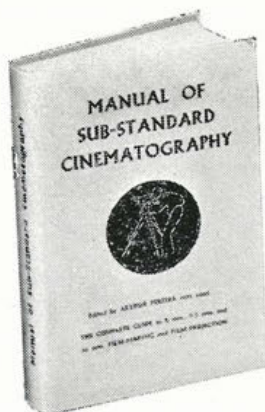
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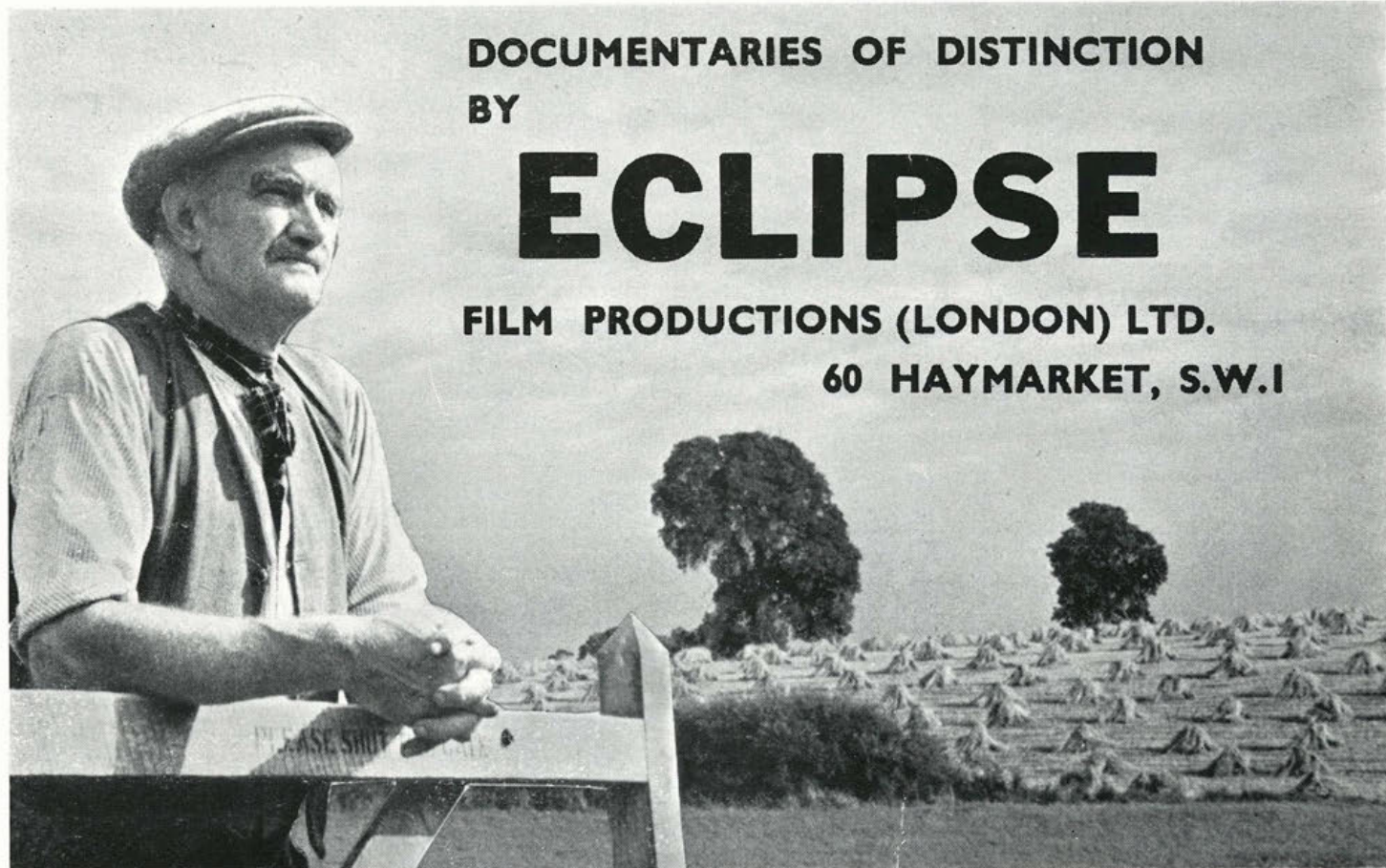
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Books on
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ON THE COVER: A dance scene from *You're My Everything*, with Dan Dailey and Shari Robinson, a new American musical film set in the 'twenties.

OVER: The full page still is of Michel Simon as Mephistopheles, in genial mood, in René Clair's new version of the Faust legend, *La Beauté du Diable*.

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TRADERS



The Front Page

IT IS USUAL, when any publication on the cinema appears to-day, for its author or editor to remind readers that it appears in a time of great crisis, against a darkening background of flux and uncertainty, and therefore fulfils a very special need. This editor is disinclined to make any such claims; although it would be foolish to deny that all is not well with the cinema to-day, that in Britain particularly its financial structure is insecure, it would also seem that there is a standing need for good film criticism and for general information on the cinema readably presented. This is true of any art, which should produce good critics as well as good artists—just as critics should enlarge the audience for artists.

The aim, then, of these books is to collect critical and topical writing on the cinema. And, of course, the film being a more industrialised art than any other, developments within the industry have a greater bearing on the quality of output; while the ratio of good films to bad has always been relatively constant. As long as the cinema remains a major industry, nothing will change this. "The majority of films," it has been remarked by no less a personage than Dore Schary, the production chief of M.G.M., "are failures and always will be." This is no reason to condone failure, or not to wish for more successes. But the danger confronting the film critic—Peter Ustinov enlarges on this in his article, "Extra Weight"—as he sits through his weekly half dozen, is that he may start living exclusively from week to week, unduly depressed by the lack of masterpieces for two or three months, prematurely soured by a concentrated diet of You-Know-Whose productions or the undertow of the Hollywood crime wave.

Let us not then, however dark the immediate horizon, lose faith; let us be comforted by the example of a man like Flaherty (who in twenty-five years has produced a mere handful of films, as valuable as they are rare) rather than unduly depressed by the more regular offerings of others who shall be nameless. In times when concentration on being facetious at the expense of the mediocre is all too fashionable, this is a more positive task than may at first be imagined.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Stills:

J. ARTHUR RANK ORGANISATION for *Give Us This Day*.
LONDON FILMS for *Louisiana Story*, *State Secret*, *The Third Man*.
20th CENTURY FOX for *You're My Everything*.
NATIONAL FILM LIBRARY for *Tabu*, *Moana*, the portrait of Flaherty, *Louisiana Story*, *Manon*.
UNITED ARTISTS for *Nanook of the North*.
R.K.O. RADIO PICTURES for *Mourning Becomes Electra*.
M.G.M. for *The Search* and *Adam's Rib*.
PARAMOUNT PICTURES and LIBERTY FILMS for *The Heiress*.
WARNER BROS. for *Winter Meeting*.
UNIVERSALIA for *La Beauté du Diable*.
LUX (Rome) and FOTO L.I.F. for *Riso Amaro*.
LUX (Paris) for *Occupe-Toi d'Amélie*.
LES FILMS ARIANE for *Orphée*. DAVIS FILMS for *Othello*.
P.D.S. (ENIC) for *Ladri di Bicicletta*.
B.B.C. for John Betjeman's photograph.
SCREENCRAFT for *Saturday Night*.

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EDITORIAL AND PUBLISHING OFFICES: British Film Institute, 164, Shaftesbury Avenue, W.C.2. (Temple Bar 1642.)
SIGHT AND SOUND Books on the film are sent free to members of the Institute: subscription rate (12 volumes), 33s. including postage.

ADVERTISING OFFICES: Husey & Co., 92, Fleet Street, E.C.4. (Central 8209.)

PRINTED BY McCorquodale & Co., Ltd., London.

BLOCKS BY W. F. Sedgwick, Ltd., London.

EDITOR: Gavin Lambert.

First published December 1949.



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POINTS OF VIEW

THE RANK ORGANISATION's annual budget statement could not have been more gloomy than the prognostications. It would take several thousand words to analyse all the factors that have contributed to this regrettable state of affairs; production problems are, of course, complicated by distribution and exhibition set-ups, and the entertainments tax—relationships still to be unravelled. Nevertheless, both art and industry depend on a positive, unshackled production programme, and it is at this end that a lasting reformation has to begin. The immediate position is that—short of large-scale intervention by the Government, or, less conceivably, a new private financier—the output of British films will be greatly curtailed for some time to come, the present degree of unemployment cannot therefore be lessened, and the much hoped for renaissance of our cinema will be further postponed under conditions that inevitably encourage the independent producer to play very safe.

There is another problem to low-budget production in this country. So far, hardly any film-makers have discovered the secret (an open one in Hollywood) of making cheap films discreetly. Ruthless economy over here usually means palpable shoddiness, as productions during the last two years from the now closed studios at Shepherds Bush have shown. In this respect, if in no other, there is something to be said for *The Interrupted Journey*, produced recently by Anthony Havelock-Allan for well under £100,000. Good craftsmanship gave this film a surface finish—an over-all professionalism, in fact—considerably above average. While preoccupation with technique may lead only to a dead end, as the American cinema has frequently shown, a high general level is an inestimable advantage. It implies a degree of natural showmanship which, while one may sneer at its cruder manifestations, has kept the American cinema financially more stable and creatively more vigorous than our own. Good technique in British films is usually restricted to the "prestige" picture, and these display almost an infatuation with it, as if high-grade craftsmanship were something only recently discovered and textbook proficiency exciting in itself. The result is that prestige pictures have tended to be cold and self-conscious, lacking in human values, and sometimes not even satisfying the minority at which they are particularly aimed.

As far as the Rank Organisation is concerned, the era of the prestige picture is now closed. One regrets it even less since quite a few of the better British films this year have moved in a different direction: a more personal style, a more modest, intimate and rewarding framework have distinguished *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, *Whisky Galore*, and a varied bunch of honourable failures including *Give Us This Day*, *All Over The Town* and *Private Angelo*.

Whether the Rank Organisation will succeed in sponsoring a commercial programme during 1950 that steers a respectable course between the arid extravagance of, say, *The Passionate Friends* and the unmentionable potboilers, remains still to be seen. (Some new script-writers will certainly have to be found before this is possible.) But no economic *débâcle* is caused simply by the figures not coming out right, just as it cannot be remedied by such cheese-

parings as the Organisation has recently dignified with the name of Operation Research (an inquiry into the relative costs of panning shots and straight cuts). While it would appear that Mr. Rank and his advisers were unwise in giving their top-line directors, before they seceded to Korda, so much money to spend, one wishes that some of these directors had spent the money more wisely. Artists may not be good businessmen, but the plain fact remains that to spend more than £200,000 on a film in this country involves a serious financial risk, since the only way to ensure receipts above that figure is by successful distribution in America. This cannot, except in special circumstances, be guaranteed; and now that the distribution position in America is more clarified (see Richard Griffith's article) our producer-directors should examine their consciences closely before agreeing to embark on lavish expenditure.

Greater attention, meanwhile, will be focused on Korda's company, which now has under its wing several independent units—Carol Reed, Powell and Pressburger, Launder and Gilliat—previously housed at Denham or Pinewood. One expresses misgivings with reluctance, but *The Third Man* cost approximately half a million (this *may* be all right, since Selznick co-produced and can presumably offer exceptional distribution facilities in America), and the present Powell-Pressburger undertaking, a Technicolor *Gone To Earth* (under similar arrangement with Selznick), must be a costly item. Perhaps disaster will be avoided for the moment by Anglo-American production, but as a permanent solution this is hardly satisfactory. It would be more encouraging to see a company with such resources experimenting in the production of good films on a low budget instead of covering expensive projects with American aid.

A final hope, maybe, rests with a few people inside—and, as yet, outside—the industry. The need for really independent activity—film-making that is not beholden to any executive power, whether it be of production, distribution or the unions—is now more urgent than ever. The gap between such amateur units as those of John Schlesinger and Alan Cooke (who made *Black Legend* and are at present working on a new film), or of Screencraft (engaged on a short story film, *Saturday Night*) and a slightly larger, slightly more professionalised one able to recover a small outlay from independent bookings, should not prove impossible to bridge. One of the best films of recent years, now internationally famous, was made with an amateur cast for the sum of £9,000. This was de Sica's *Bicycle Thieves*.

One of the new services offered by the British Film Institute in 1950 is a repertory season of films, silent and sound, designed to illustrate the historical progress of the cinema. The programmes, arranged by Ernest Lindgren, will include some rarely seen, important films from the Preservation Section of the National Film Library, and a special series devoted to experimental cinema. The season begins in January, with weekly screenings at a private theatre in central London.

ROME—PARIS—HOLLYWOOD



A scene from "*Riso Amaro*" ("*Bitter Rice*"), a film set in the rice-fields of Northern Italy, directed by Giuseppe de Santis. Doris Dowling and Silvana Mangano.

ROME

NINETEEN FORTY-NINE sees an enormous increase in Italian film production. By the late summer sixty films were already finished, whilst of the sixty-eight in preparation thirty more will be ready by the end of this year. Recent Government measures favouring producers, the reconstruction of studios, new technical equipment, the financial re-organisation of the industry, together with foreign co-production schemes, have all aided this big total. But such soaring production brings new difficulties, not the least of which is the familiar fight for foreign markets. Italy's films must export or die; but shall they be angled for universal taste and risk diluting their original merits, or shall they continue in the "Italian school" tradition which might limit overseas sales? Similar problems have confused other film industries, and Italy's own testing time is near.

The trend of film-making is now towards modern, light comedy. There is a definite easing away from the soul-searching subjects of post-war misery. A number of directors have recently filmed stories modelled on *Four Steps in the Clouds*. Blasetti himself, impressed like everyone by his world success, is just about to start its successor, perhaps as a reaction from the herculean task of directing the never-ending historical fresco, *Fabiola*.

Apart from the usual historical and operatic themes for home consumption the remaining films in production are largely topical, with regional settings. Giuseppe de Santis (whose *Caccia Tragica* was recently shown over here) has

just finished his third film, *Pasqua de Sangue* (*Easter of Blood*), a story of shepherd life in Ciociaria. In this picture his cameraman, Piero Portalupi, introduces deep-focus to Italy, to experiment with de Santis' outdoor realism. Pietro Germi's new film, his second, *In Nome delle Legge* (*In the Name of the Law*) is woven around true incidents of clashes between the police and the outlaws of Sicily. He is now preparing *Cammino della Speranza* (*The Road of Hope*), the adventures of a mining family who emigrate from Sicily to Northern Italy, seeking work. After *Il Grido della Terra* (*The Earth Cries Out*), about the struggle in Palestine, Coletti made *Il Lupo della Sila* (*The Wolf of the Sila Mountains*), a story of woodcutters living in the Calabrian mountains and, at present, is shooting *Miss Italia*, a film of the tragedy that often follows the triumph of beauty queens. This subject was originally meant for Lattuada, who is shortly to start work on *Lo Sceicco Bianco* (*The White Sheik*) about the manufacture of comic-strip papers, Italy's newest craze. Lattuada alternates between literary subjects in period settings and topical themes realistically treated. And unable to resist following up his successful *Anni Difficili* (*Difficult Years*), the prolific Zampa plans *Anni Facili* (*Easy Years*), an obvious title for the sequel.

At the moment, Italy is unquestionably the most prolific film industry in Europe, and interesting developments will no doubt occur when its versatility gets further strained and inflated production seeks new outlets.

FRANCES MULLIN CLARK

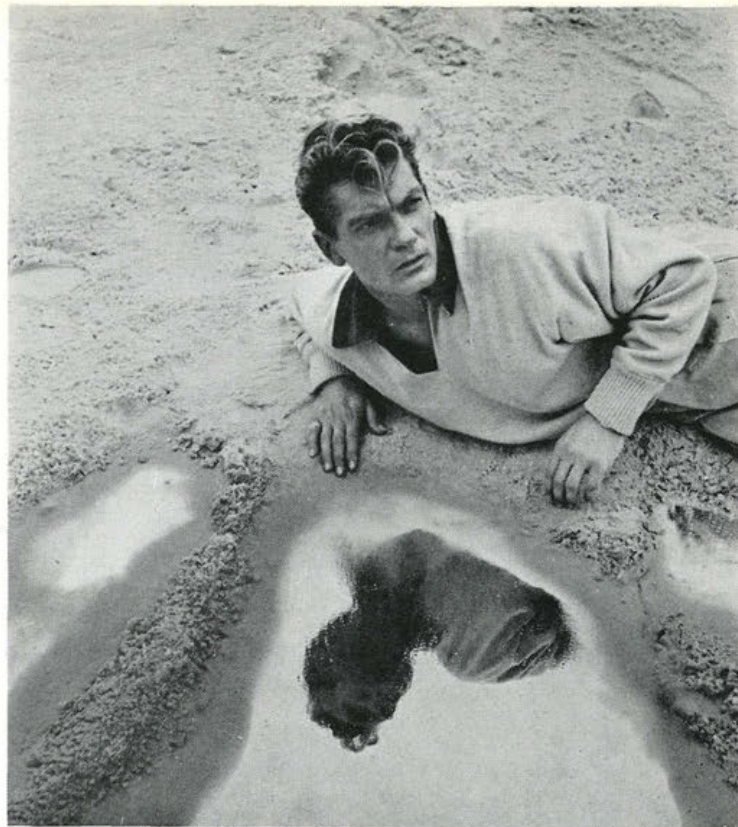
PARIS

FRENCH PRODUCTION offers a more lively prospect than it did a few months ago: Marcel Carné, Jean Cocteau and (in Italy) René Clair are at work, Clouzot has begun a comedy and the prodigious Abel Gance, after years of relative inactivity, will start a new film on an epic scale quite soon.

After nearly three months' shooting, Carné's *drame d'atmosphère*, *La Marie du Port*, is nearing completion. It is an adaptation of a Simenon novel, effected by Carné himself with Louis Chavance, who wrote the script of *Le Corbeau*. The story concerns a man who falls in love with his mistress' young sister. Henri Alekan is in charge of photography, the décors are as usual by Trauner, and the music is Joseph Kosma's. Jean Gabin heads a cast which also includes Blanchette Brunoy (the heroine of *Goupi Mains Rouges*), and two young newcomers, Nicole Courcel and Claude Romain. Unlike those in earlier Carné films (which were reconstructed in the studio), the exteriors of *La Marie* are real, and were shot near Cherbourg, the setting of the novel. This is Carné's first film for nearly three years, and he says of it: "I see it as quite a violent story, but not without a certain humour and poetry—a sort of *comédie brutale*."

Also nearly completed is Cocteau's *Orphée*, an adaptation of his own play, written in the thirties, which was a modern version of the Greek legend: the film brings the action up to 1949. He has added certain characters, notably Death, who appears as a beautiful Princess, and Heurtebise, her assistant, who acts as her chauffeur.

Cocteau has given *Orphée* the superficial aspect of *un film policier*, for the benefit of the public, at the same time preserving his own highly individual style. "It will be an unrealistic film shot in realistic décors", he says characteristically. Jean Marais plays Orphée, Maria Déa is Eurydice, Maria Casarès and François Perier are Death and her chauffeur.



"Orphée," Jean Cocteau's modern-dress version of the legend of Orpheus and Eurydice. Jean Marais.

Abel Gance, who has been preparing *La Divine Tragédie* for three years, expects to start shooting in February. This vast epic of the life of Christ is linked to the twentieth century by the parallel action of an imaginary situation in which atomic bombs have destroyed the world, leaving only one area inhabitable. Christ appears to the survivors who have taken refuge there, arising from a holy relic brought by a priest, and said to have been His shroud. Here, the Biblical narrative is related to a complex pattern of parallels taking place in the modern world.

The film, which is to be interpreted by anonymous actors, is to be made in two versions—French and English.

It will employ Gance's three technical developments: a triple screen; the Pictograph, which is a perfectionised deep focus device; and Sound Perspective, a system in which the projection hall is equipped with multiple speakers, the number of them in use at any given time being variable at the will of the director.

The title of Nicole Vedrès' new film, her first since *Paris* 1900, will be either 1950 or *La Vie Commence Demain*. Its theme is the contribution of various branches of science and the arts to contemporary living. A young man (played by Jean-Pierre Aumont) is worried about the problems of the future and goes to put questions to a number of distinguished people, including Picasso, Sartre, Le Corbusier, Gide, the biologist André Rostand, Joliot Curie, and a psychoanalyst. Their answers are not confined to their own individual work, but deal generally with the subject in which each specialises, and are illustrated by material edited from many sources. The film is being produced under the patronage of U.N.E.S.C.O.



Victor Guyau in a scene from Autant-Lara's new film, "Occupe-Toi d'Amélie," from a famous vaudeville farce performed by Barrault's company this year.

The principal actors in René Clair's *La Beauté du Diable* (his own version of the Faust legend) are Michel Simon and Gérard Philipe. Simon has the double role of Professor Faust and Mephistopheles, and Philipe is Henri Faust as a young student. The film is a Franco-Italian co-production made in Rome, where shooting has now practically finished. Italians participate in both cast and production team, though the more important credits go to the Frenchmen: photography by Michel Kelber (the cameraman of *Le Diable au Corps*), décors by Léon Barsacq, script and dialogue by Clair, in collaboration with the playwright Salacrou.

PETER SIMMONS



Orson Welles as Othello and Michael MacLiammoir as Iago in Welles' adaptation of the play, filmed in Africa, Italy and France this year.

HOLLYWOOD

I WONDER IF CRITICS Richard Winnington, of the *London News Chronicle*, and the present editor of this publication know the full effect of their late efforts on behalf of *They Live By Night*, a modest but admirable little American film which but for their published observations might never have had a regular British run. Until, via machinations unknown to this writer, the film got itself the enviable showcasing of a booking by London's specialised Academy theatre, prints of the lyrical gangster film starring Farley Granger, Cathy O'Donnell and Howard Da Silva had been gathering dust in RKO's London vaults—fate of a type identical with that which the film had suffered, and might have continued to suffer, for one wonders how long, in America also. Instead, the chorus of indignant acclaim,



Ralph Richardson, Miriam Hopkins and Olivia de Havilland in William Wyler's new film, "The Heiress," adapted from Henry James' "Washington Square."

championing the film on the part of the entire reviewing corps of the British film press, with the resultant tour by the film through one of Britain's regular circuits, dramatically brought the film, after a full year's neglect, to the attention of its American owners. It was stated that there had been no deep-eyed plot to suppress the film—most studios in those days stacked large backlogs of completed films, and policy was to release expensive films first. Be that as it may, the news to-night is that reviewers in Buenos Aires last week enthusiastically seconded the British judgment. And we in the U.S., it is finally promised, will get a chance to pass on the film, following a national advertising campaign already some three weeks old, beginning November 10th.

Nicholas Ray, the film's director, is the creative name which has been principally linked with the film, and deservedly so, no less appropriately for the film's having been his first full-directional assignment and in view of his script contribution; but the film's full history tends to point up the complementary blessing of having a good producer as, in this case, John Houseman, a man with theatre, radio and journalistic experience antecedent to his film entry—and, indeed, continuing to alternate with it, in about equal amounts. Advisedly so: the way things are to-day, Houseman says, crossbreeding of Hollywood's vigour with Broadway's scope, indispensably strengthens both. Houseman, as the solidest, least pretentious of recent Eastern ambassadors to Gower Street, is the best evidence of his theory's validity.

They Live By Night had been, it turns out, Houseman's baby to start with, in the sense that it was he who found

the story (on the RKO shelf, where it had stood since 1937), toiled with it through three changes of RKO administration, worked on other pictures for the privilege of working on it, sold Ray to then studio chief Dore Schary and Schary on letting Ray direct; finally sweated out the years waiting for it to be released.

"But with how much agonising friction does everything get done!" is Houseman's plaint now that it is all nearly over—"this not big job that should have taken at most three months, been worked on, finished and gone on from to something else—instead, it is three years—when it comes out we take more gratification in it than it deserves. . . ."

Latest is that the Ray-Houseman partnership will be resumed at RKO with work sometime in the future on Gerald Butler's novel *Mad With Much Heart*.

You have probably heard too much about the "re-issue" phenomenon in the United States—no doubt as a symptom of some fault in the American film landscape. This fall, in addition to the economic motives pushing the films of ten, fifteen and even twenty years ago back into the theatres, we have a fresh and far more attractive motive appearing in the re-issue business. Alleging a dearth of foreign films for the "arties" (the theatre-type also dubbed "sure-seaters" by *Variety*), a major distributor of French films in this country has persuaded the larger American studios, that have always regarded last year's film as a shame that must be concealed, to let them handle certain past films of distinction—by W. C. Fields, Lubitsch, the Marx Brothers, and Preston Sturges. When you consider that

these *sure-seaters* are to be found in any community over 200,000, and that their operators will now be encouraged to make up their programmes from the best of foreign as well as American films, is it fanciful to suppose that we may have here the germ of a limited film repertory system, providing modified film-society type pleasures for a different and larger public. With the barbaric distribution arrangement current in this country, where films are killed off sooner than their prints wear out, this is a significant development. Though no doubt artificially motivated, this new move involves a recognition of the durability of film quality that we had fairly given up hope for.

A year ago—in November, 1948—James Agee came to Hollywood, on a commission to write some "specials" for *Life*—on subjects of his own choice. This assignment was greeted with pleasure by all who had been stimulated for years by his *Nation* criticism (notable examples: *Vigo*, *Verdoux*, D. W. Griffith, *Farrebique*) and by his anonymous reviews in *Time* (historic three-pagers: *Henry V*, *Hamlet*). The first of these *Life* pieces, titled "Comedy's Greatest Era", and appearing in the issue of September 5th, is a film event, in the opinion of this correspondent. Monograph-length and illustrated with strategic stills, it defines the work of Sennett, Chaplin, Keaton, Lloyd and Langdon, and describes sound's aftermath for comedy, with the free-and-easy finality of a little classic.

Filmgoers will have seen the same critic's work, in a different key, in the film *The Quiet One*, whose narration Agee helped to plan, and wrote.

HAROLD LEONARD



Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn in their latest comedy, "Adam's Rib," written by Garson Kanin and directed by George Cukor.

FILM IN THE MAKING

State Secret

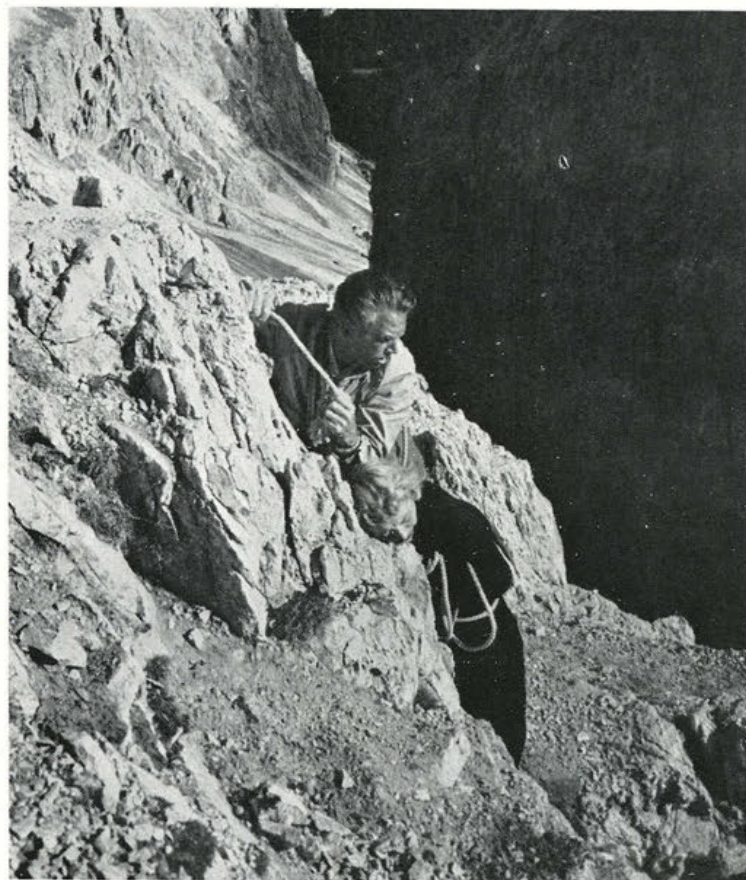
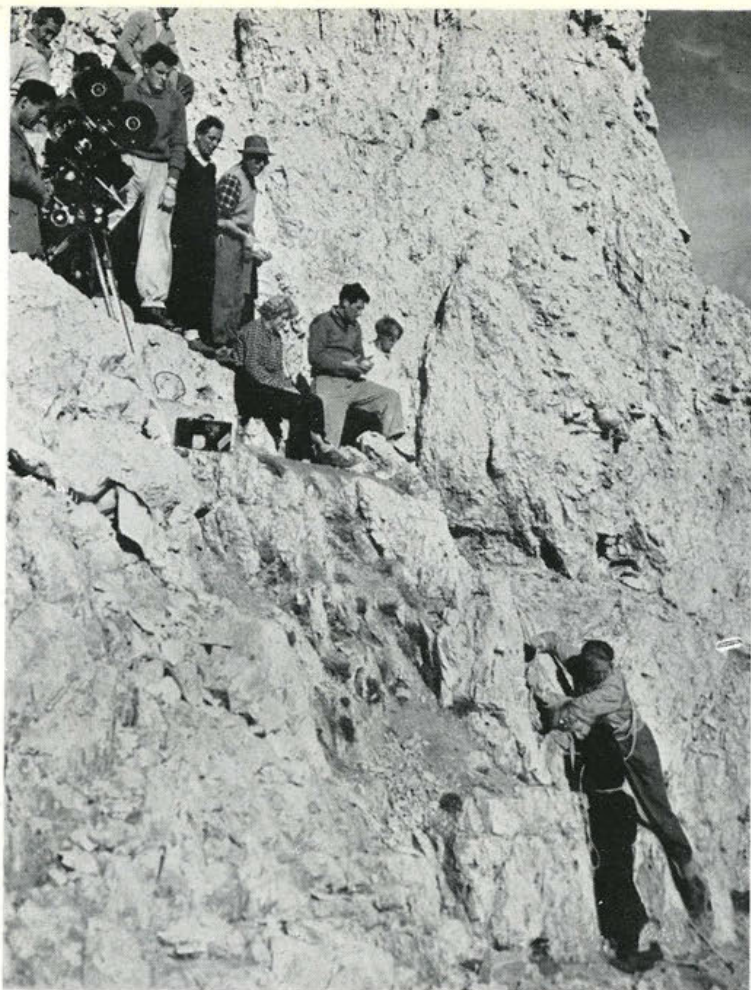
NEARLY EVERYONE enjoys a good chase film; it provides a happy hunting-ground for all kinds of cinemanes. Fashionable-highbrow in *The Third Man*, slick and straightforward in numerous American films, the chase is established as one of the cinema's basic myths, and the devices of tension and the resourcefulness of the fugitive are, it seems, inexhaustible. It is this "relaxation of noble minds"—as someone described the detective story—at which Sidney Gilliat is aiming, not for the first time, in his new film *State Secret*.

The story of *State Secret* takes place in a central European country called, for purposes of diplomacy, Vosnia. A young American doctor (played by Douglas Fairbanks Jr.) visiting the country, comes by accident into possession of an important political secret, and from that moment onwards the mechanisms of pursuit and espionage are set in motion. A wanted man, he has to make his escape from Vosnia, and eventually attempts to do so by crossing the frontier over a range of mountains. Gilliat had the original idea for this film many years ago—from a newspaper story that he read before the war. At that time it was for various reasons impracticable to go ahead with the film; but the intrigues and dangers of Central Europe are timeless, and the story is as topical and as probable to-day as it was in 1938. In fact, Gilliat says, many of the incidents which he wrote into the original story have been almost paralleled in subsequent developments of the case.

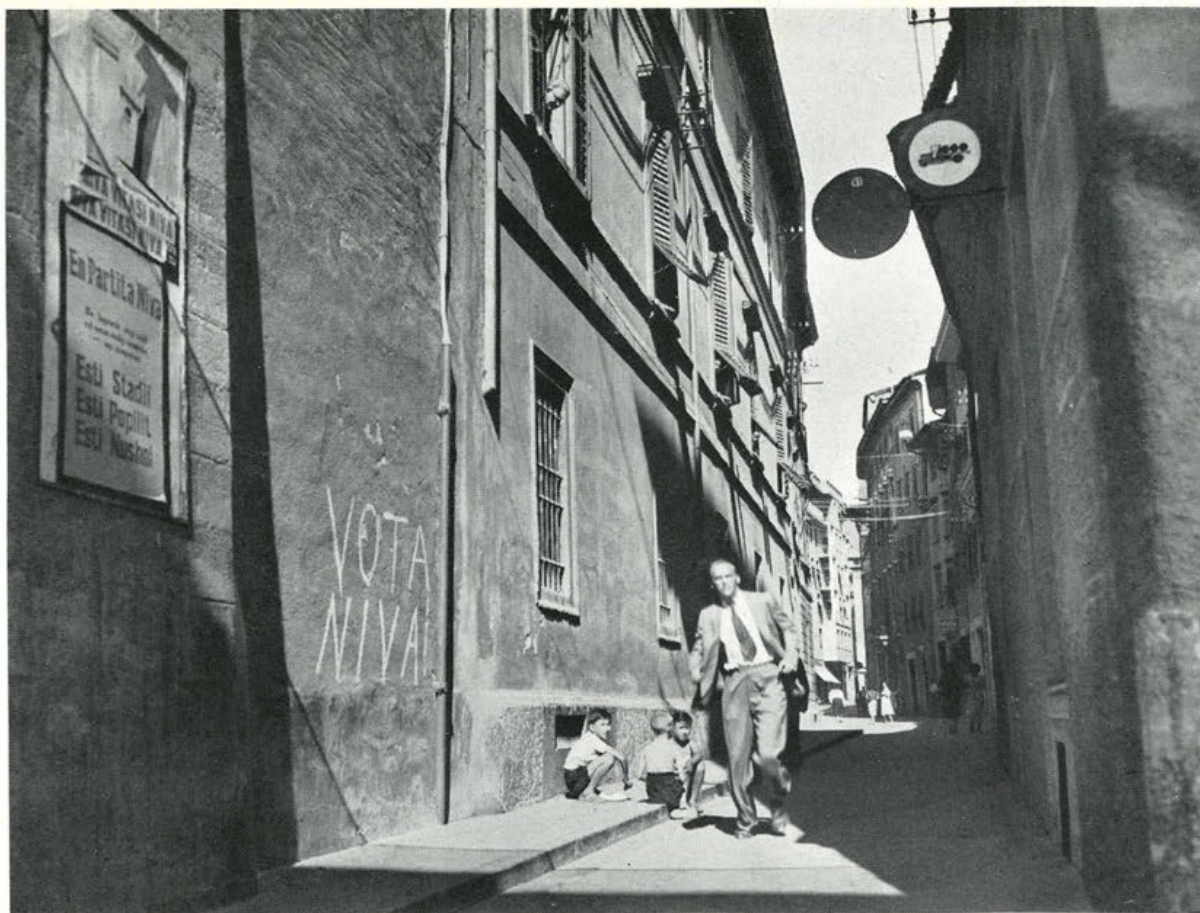
Gilliat is a very practical and thorough craftsman—both by temperament and, perhaps, through examples set by directors for whom he worked when he was a script-writer: these include Hitchcock and Carol Reed. (The Hitchcock influence, out of *The Lady Vanishes* is, one may suggest, a lasting one.) Gilliat decided to shoot as much as possible of *State Secret* on location, not only to give the exteriors that now somewhat overworked authenticity, but to cut down back-projection to a minimum. There will be hardly any photographic backings used in the film.

The unit spent eight weeks in Trento and the Dolomites: Trento for a number of scenes taking place in Vosnia's capital—including the doctor's initial flight and a spectacular street demonstration scene (see opposite): the Dolomites for the fugitive's climactic escape, in which the star is not spared any realities, as the illustrations opposite bear witness. Neither hero nor heroine (Glynis Johns) is permitted the tired evasion—the studio tread-wheel banked with artificial snow which countless stars have turned against a photographic mountain backing. In the story, they are taken across the mountains by a local guide. In the film, they are taken across the mountains, and the guide who appears in these scenes is a professional.

The cameraman on *State Secret* is Robert Krasker (who photographed *Odd Man Out* and *The Third Man*). The chase-shot (opposite) is recognisably Krasker in lighting and composition, but on the whole *State Secret* offers few



Escape through the Dolomites. Top: the "State Secret" unit on location in the mountains preparing to shoot on Douglas Fairbanks Jr. and Glynis Johns having trouble with their rope on a steep climb. Below: the scene as it will appear in the film.



A fugitive from Vosnia: Douglas Fairbanks Jnr. in "State Secret."

opportunities for the ingenious low-key effects which have distinguished his work with Reed in particular; he is employing for the most part an unemphatic, straightforward style, and finds the picture an exercise in plainer high-key photography. In the studio, I watched the scene of an official Vosnian reception being shot; the set is a banqueting hall, where Government presentations are being made—medals to various dignitaries and an award to the American doctor for his achievements in medical science. (A scene reminiscent of Hitchcock in its combina-

tion of ordinariness and undercurrents of tension—the presentation is actually a trick to get the doctor in the hall.) The honours are announced in the Vosnian language, specially constructed for the film by an expert, a mixture of Slavonic and Latin which sounds highly authentic. The continental actors—Karel Stepanek, Walter Rilla, Peter Illing, Gerard Heinz *et al.*—take to it fluently. Gilliat performs with unobtrusive ease on the floor, unflurried but quick-witted. One guesses that for him a film is almost completely visualised in the shooting script.



A street demonstration in "State Secret." Left: the camera crew lining up a shot. Krasker in sunglasses and white shirt standing behind the operator, continuity girl in foreground, Gilliat seated second from left in sunglasses and shorts. Right: Action!

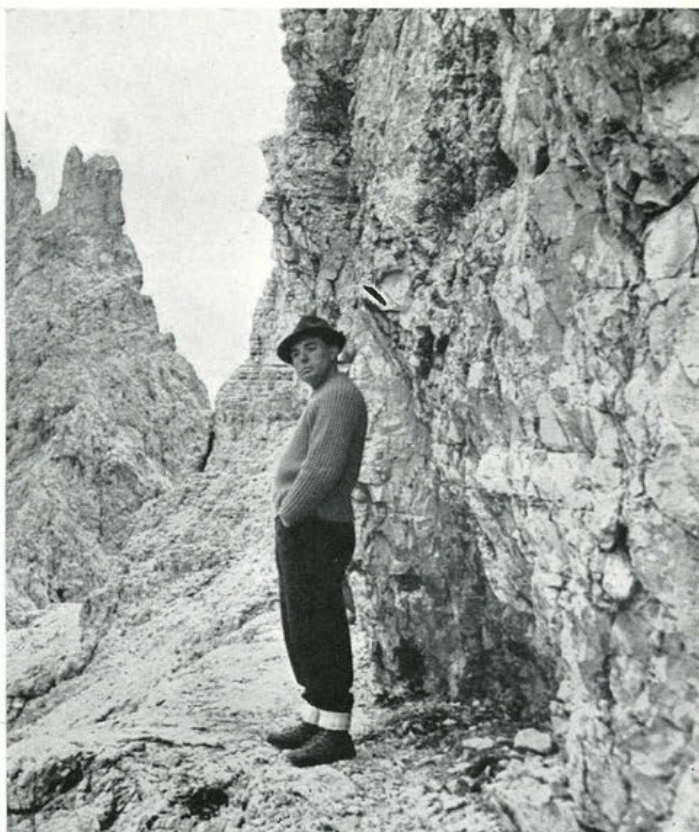
In Britain to-day there is too often a wide gap between the costly pomp and temperament of the prestige picture (which may include anything from *Hamlet* to *The Passionate Friends*) and the dull, routine hackwork of the pot-boiler. A proficient and unpretentious craftsman, a writer of lively and literate dialogue, Gilliat does much to fill this gap—the kind of figure who is one of the mainstays of the American cinema but is rare over here: the maker of clever, adept entertainments. And the man who can win satisfactory box-office returns without insulting adult intelligences seems particularly valuable in view of the state of the British film industry to-day.

SIDNEY GILLIAT: 41 years old, son of a former editor of the *Evening Standard*. He entered films as assistant to the veteran Walter Forde, then making serial comedies, and afterwards joined Gaumont-British to script *Friday the 13th*, *Rome Express* and *Jack's the Boy*. He met Frank Launder in the late 'thirties, and their writing partnership flowered in *The Lady Vanishes*. During the war they formed themselves into a writer-director team, with *Millions Like Us*, and then founded their own company, Individual Pictures, to make *The Rake's Progress*, *Green for Danger* and others. Now they make films concurrently (collaboration apparently restricted to their appearance as co-producers on the credit titles), Launder directing his version of the stage farce *The Happiest Days of Your Life* while Gilliat directs *State Secret*.

As a film-maker, Sidney Gilliat is a born entertainer; this is reflected also in his private life—he is a natural raconteur. He has a dry, quick sense of humour and disclaims high ambitions—perhaps just as well, when after some talk of a life of Karl Marx from Individual Pictures we had instead *The Blue Lagoon* and *London Belongs to Me*. But it would be unfair to blame Gilliat (or Launder) for not giving us films of great moment, audacious experiment; he is obviously not the man to do so, he is in fact deliberately non-committal about his aims and will not admit to any particular preferences or longings. His gift for acid observation and dialogue caused *The Rake's Progress* to be rated even higher in France than over here (it is one of the few recent British films to be shown regularly in French ciné-club programmes); his inventiveness and flair for lively narrative will no doubt make *State Secret* a most enjoyable entertainment.

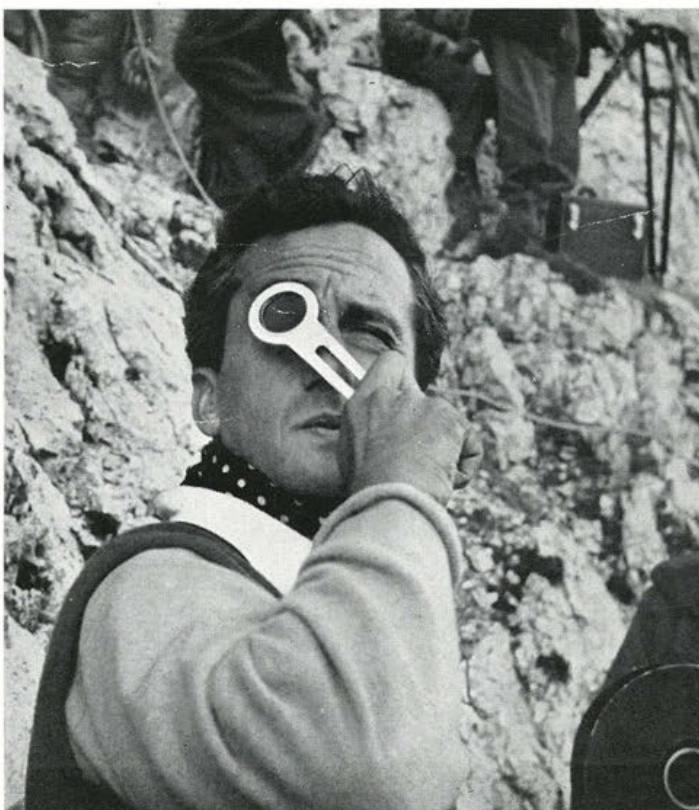
ROBERT KRASKER: 37 years old, Australian born, he is one of the most brilliant cameramen in Britain to-day. He began work as assistant in the Paramount studios in Paris, and later became head of the RKO-British camera department. Since the war he has photographed *Henry V*, *Odd Man Out*, *Brief Encounter*, *Uncle Silas* and *The Third Man*. In black-and-white his style is almost immediately distinctive, with its delicately low-keyed, often romantic images; but that he is not merely a mannerist, his beautiful control of colour in *Henry V* showed, and the simpler, plainer black-and-white technique he is using for *State Secret* will show again. As well as being one of the most accomplished British cameramen, Krasker is also one of the most untemperamental and modest.

FRANK ENLEY



Above: Sidney Gilliat in the Dolomites. A mountain meditation.

Below: Robert Krasker in the Dolomites, testing the light for a shot.



Second Opinion

THE BORED AND EXHAUSTED

John Betjeman

*The editor asked an eminent writer for his views on the cinema.
The result, as expected, is a chronicle of disillusion.*

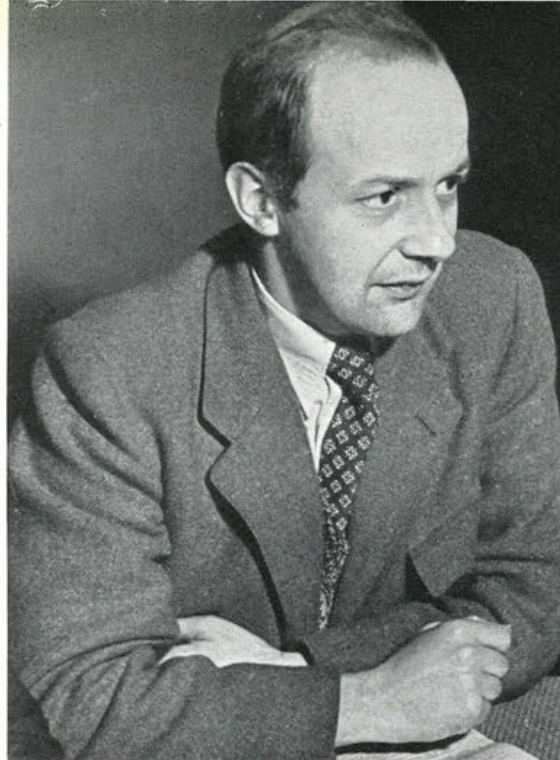
I ONCE USED to write about films for a London evening paper. It would be presumptuous of me to describe what I wrote as criticism. Sometimes I would see seven or eight films a week. I also had to visit studios and interview stars. I can honestly say I was happier at school.

As for working in the films division of the Ministry of Information, I have rarely felt a bigger cad. Too terrified to leave, for fear I should find myself in something worse, I hung on until I was intrigued out of it. Most people who were there with me will agree that the night raids on London were nothing to the warring careerism, at first personal and later personal and political, which went on in that division during the day.

These experiences have left me with a distaste for films but with a certain canniness acquired on the outer fringes of film life. I know, for instance, never to believe what advertisements and trailers say about a film. I know which film critics are likely to enjoy the same films that I do. I know that stars have nothing to do with whether a film is good or not, but that everything depends on the director of the film and that he occupies the same position as the producer of a stage play. So I always try to find out who the director of a film is before I see it. When I ask the woman in the box office who the director of a film is she does not know. Both she and the cinema manager think I mean the star. Trailers ought to mention directors, but I do not think they generally do. And after directors I look for script writers and cameramen. The agony suffered to acquire this commonplace knowledge about films is not worth it. I do not mind if I never see another film again.

Nevertheless, about once in two months I go with the missus, but without the kidz, to the pictures in Hungerford. The cinema there is what you would call a family house. I go purely for relaxation when I am fed up with reading second-rate modern books for review, because we are both too tired to get food and wash up, because the house is cold and we have decided to have a meal at an inn.

We are not regular patrons and never go if the evening is fine. To come out of the Hungerford cinema having seen bathing belles in Technicolor and to gaze across miles of downs gold in sunset, which the box office of this remote, high-perched family house commands, is to realise the full blasphemy and urban depravity of the film, especially if it is a musical. (Genuine farm workers, of course, who never notice landscape in the aesthetic sense, see no contrast.) To come out of a picture gallery of great paintings heightens one's appreciation of the ordinary scene. Colours are more intense and more startlingly contrasted, faces more skilfully sculptured, skies, stones



*John Betjeman, question-master during
a Brains Trust programme.*

and trees more radiant than they were when we entered the building. To come out into the world after having seen a film is like waking up from a hangover. One is either frightened, doped or elated according to the intoxicant.

Of course, films are an art, if entertainment is an art. How permanent a form of art they are as compared with painting or literature is not, I think, a matter of more than academic importance. To me they are certainly less easy to remember than any other form of creative work.

Films are for the exhausted and bored. Boredom is as exhausting as work. Try a little unemployment if you are not used to it. What a relief then to hear a nice rich old lady tell me the story of Cinderella and other well-known folk tales with variations. I don't have to use my imagination: all I need to do is eat potato crisps and watch while she goes on and on dangling situations worse or better than mine before my eyes and either singing to me or holding me with the spell of her story.

I think feature films are just popular dreams. They have no propaganda value whatsoever. They merely put a person into a state of mind to receive propaganda. A Western will so elate an irresponsible youth that, under the spell of what he has seen on the screen, he may drive a tradesman too fast and kill children. Other youths will form gangs. A film may make some silly ass think his wife does not understand him. A girl may dress herself up like a tart in order to seem, as she thinks, like some film star. Many girls assume American accents and so do some youths with their eyes too close together and more chin than brain. The effect, however, wears off just as drinks do. Only those who go to the cinema every other night or more often are permanently drunk with fantasy.

It is when the party bosses realise that it is when we come out of the cinema we are most vulnerable, it is when this moment comes that we must be careful. Let us beware when they are waiting in the lamplit high road on their little soap boxes, waiting with the telling catch phrase that will play upon the emotions that a film has engendered.

EXTRA WEIGHT

Peter Ustinov

MOZART WAS LUCKY. He was like a jockey riding a race without the encumbrance of extra weight. In a lifetime of tragic brevity, he still managed to turn out over 40 symphonies, for the very good reason that he was not tormented by aesthetic problems of form, texture or idea. He felicitously sent his spirit soaring within the recognised framework, for the joy of eternity. The patrons of the time were satisfied, and so are we.

Since that date, output per creative artist has, on the whole, decreased. Only in one country has the harvest of artistic manifestation been maintained at a consistently high pressure. The country in question is the Soviet Union, and the reason for this apparent richness is that artistic problems are discouraged if not actually forbidden: more aeroplanes, more tractors, more symphonies. The curve on the symphonic graph is promising, and the industrially-minded are well satisfied with the way composers respond to "just criticism", and increase their output. The less said about the quality of this deceptively luxuriant harvest the better.

In the capitalistic West we go to the other extreme. While we do not risk disgrace with every shyly-penned discord, with every muttered hint of despair, we work in a spirit of mental constipation—the logical outcome of a combination of liberty of thought, and the regiment of critics who await every artistic manifestation with the eagerness of bees who recognise their livelihood in the heart of the pollenating flower.

Nowadays there are few composers of the West with more than a handful of major works to their credit. This is not surprising, as there is a prevailing chaos in all art forms which imposes on us a host of extraneous considerations well outside the simple, happy duty of a Mozart. In this chaos, composers are writing vast works in which narrators declaim, while the orchestra, subdivided into decomposition, frets effectively, and a few mimetic experts indulge in choreographic dumb-show in the foreground, or else they write arid chamber-music works for highly eccentric combinations of instruments. Dramatists struggle in a welter of suggestive sets, masks and messages. Painters, further down the cul-de-sac than perhaps any other artists, fight their battles in the vast no-man's-land between Picasso's tubular ladies and Munnings' tea-shoppe hordes. The cinema, invented at the dawn of this chaos, has never known anything else.

Just as there are always those who can earn their living by teaching others what they cannot do themselves in all the fundamental arts, so the advent of the cinema as a form of expression has magnetically attracted its own academicians, people who invent glossaries of "cinematic terms", people who talk about "true cinema". They are the exact parallel of the writers of books on how to construct a play, except that the cinema has never had its Sardou or its Pinero. It has had no time for a perceptible and general reaction against a style, because it has never known a style. From the beginning it has been bustled by technical innovation, like a fly which is continually per-

vented from settling on the soiled tablecloth for its banquet by tormentors with ever more efficacious and streamlined swats. There has been a depressing lack of upsurge and natural decadence, as the yardstick by which such trends may be assessed has itself been changing continuously.

There are those who rue the passing of the silent days. To them the intrusion of sound is an embarrassment, and they are invariably dangerously biased in favour of the irretrievable past. A man like Chaplin suffers under the oppression of this nostalgia. But sound is something which has not only to be faced, but to be exploited. It is unrealistic to hanker for the unattainable, and Chaplin is not to be blamed if the simplicity which was once the ideal vehicle for his genius has now developed into a high-powered artistic and financial mess. He exploits it as best he can.

There are others who call the cinema a "visual medium". The implication that the cinema must be emancipated from the evil influence of the theatre is always quite clear in this tag. When this view is propounded it is with the fervour usually associated with a national minority seeking liberty from the shackles of an old and sleepy empire. But the cinema's roots are, and always will be, in the theatre, or rather in the actor; and without the theatre there would be no Olivier, Richardson, Jovet or Fredric March. Admittedly, there are exceptions to this rule, but on the whole it remains valid. The cinema does not always recognise the great debt of gratitude it owes to its benign but impoverished parent. It is however true, I think, that those in the cinema who do recognise this debt of gratitude draw from it a very handsome dividend. Unhesitatingly I quote as an example the greatest of British directors, Carol Reed, with whom I have had the privilege of working on several occasions, and who taught me most of what I am continually told I have forgotten. Carol Reed's greatness lies not in his technical virtuosity, but in his natural sympathy with the actor, and his knowledge of the range and expressive power of the instruments under his baton. Carol Reed was an actor himself. De Sica, the most brilliant director of the Italian Renaissance, is an actor, and his phenomenal control over the amateur cast in *Ladri di Biciclette* can only be put down to his masterly understanding of his own art.

Let us be realistic, and say that the cinema is not only visual but also oral, even if we agree that it is a medium, and not an art. Unless it is freed from the unheard-of complications of finance and general over-staffing, it can never be more than a great confusion of artistic manifestations. When film workers decide to become their own producers, their own writers and their own directors, this has rarely anything to do with conceit or ambition. If I may speak about myself for a moment, I will say categorically that in the case of *Private Angelo* I undertook these many functions purely in order to simplify the problems of making a film, and in order to try and make the film a complete artistic manifestation instead of a diffusion of divergent manifestations. Naturally, I am prepared to admit that the diffusions might be more successful than

the domination of a single personality, with all its faults magnified and undiluted, but still I believe that there is no future in diffusion, as it only breeds frustration, and makes of a film a battleground, a source of recrimination and pettiness in which responsibilities are unclear, and too much is left to chance. It is nonsense to say that the undertaking of so many jobs is beyond the physical or mental powers of one person. The mind finds it much easier to reach decisions than to wrangle incessantly with uncongenial overseers, although these decisions must not be taken dictatorially, but in the spirit of the greatest humility towards the many excellent technicians with whom one is privileged to collaborate. The main essential is to know what one wants on the screen. For better or for worse, I got what I wanted in *Private Angelo*, and joyfully take this opportunity of accepting all responsibility for it.

The necessity to simplify is becoming quite clear as the gold rush days pass into oblivion, and we are left hovering on the brink of a general financial disaster. The efforts to economise are not helped by an uneasy suspicion that no industry deserves to survive in which the retailer is more important than the manufacturer. And here I wish to reiterate a view I have held for a long time, which is that it is our great misfortune on this island to talk superficially the same language as the Americans. First of all, we would get on much better together with the aid of unflurried interpreters, and secondly it would not lead us into the temptation of believing that the frontiers of our market stand at the Mexican border instead of at Land's End. At the best of times, the British have a sentimental love of the unexportable. One dreads to think what would have happened had Stravinsky been British; one knows exactly what would have happened had Elgar been French. It is tragic to see the number of misguided British films which have grandiosely catered for 120,000,000 Americans, and have therefore not even pleased the millions at home. When England decides to discover South America for the benefit of Lincoln's ghost, things are pretty desperate, especially when the voyage of discovery turns out to be one in the direction of Hollywood, and when our party has to turn back, and admit defeat.

Another drawback is London, which is too big, far too big. The audience is spoiled, and the critics overworked. It is very easy to attack the critics, but what we sometimes forget (I include myself in this) is that they have to digest an immense amount of material every week, and standards of justice go by the board under the sheer pressure of fatigue. One result of this is that they give the appearance at times of being congenitally incapable of listening. The eye has to be fed at the expense of the ear. This is not so in the provinces.

I had the enlightening experience a little while ago of having a play performed in Scotland. The English critics took me to task. One of them in particular, a writer of a certain distinction, fell prey to a transport of passion, and declared that although he knew that it was not done to give away the plot of a play, he had no compunction in doing so on this occasion. He then proceeded, with unconscious tact, to give away the plot of what I can only describe as someone else's work. This lack of comprehension would have been depressing had not the Scottish critics found it in themselves to be a little more generous,

and for the very good reason that they explained my intentions with a lucidity of which I myself would be incapable.

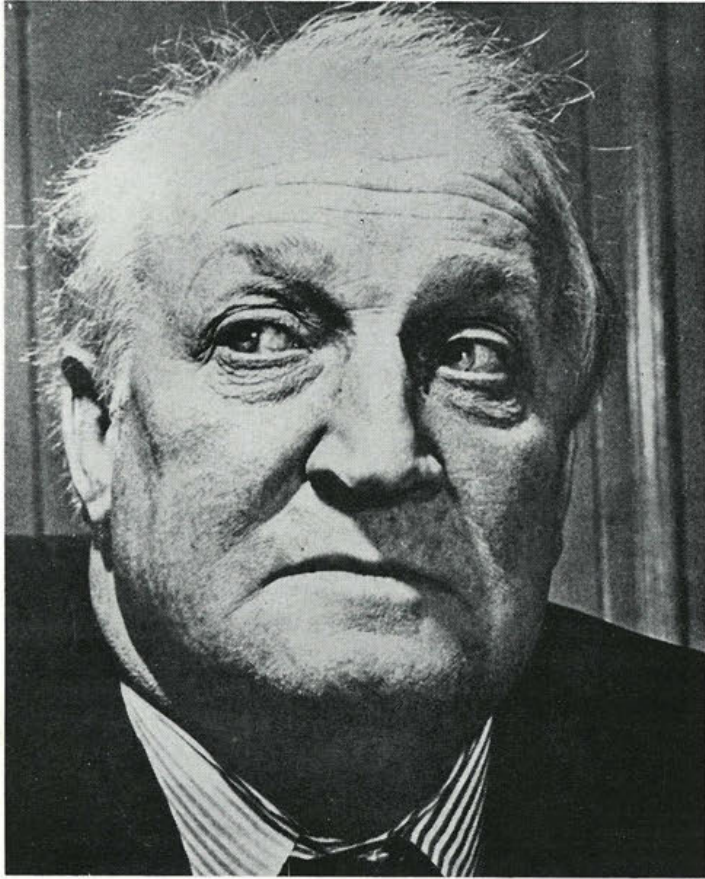
I do not believe that the reasons for this sharp divergence of opinion are far to seek. It has little to do with national temperament. It has to do with the scope and tempo of intellectual activity. Scotland has all the restricted, and therefore conscientious, intellectual life of a Scandinavian country. The output is small, and carefully assessed, and the people take a justifiable pride in their every valid achievement. London, on the other hand, is the bustling market place compared to the exclusive shop. Here, in the mad profusion of cinemas, theatres, concert-halls, there is too much to digest, and so, as a result, the standard of audience appreciation and, it must be added, of critical appraisal, is lower than in most other towns in the British Isles. "He who is tired of London is tired of life". No longer, Dr. Johnson; he who is tired of London has been to Scotland, or Norway, or Denmark, and has tasted the joys of an isolated, responsible artistic community.

It is difficult to see a solution without being plunged into an Orwellian gloom. I was a critic once on a modest monthly, and even with such a luxury of time in which to work, I discovered the great strain of trying to be scrupulously fair to the many honest endeavours which I was called upon to assess; I recognised the temptation of laying down the law to a talent which is probably far superior to my own. No, criticism is not easy. It is a grimly responsible function, more than ever in an age of Brains Trusts and Quizzes, of critics on the air and polls and inaccurate averages and graphic appraisal. It is my belief that the future of films lies in those lands where the pioneering spirit can be preserved by the lack of an organised industry, where the pith of popular tradition can be captured without the necessity of formulae or of intricate finance. So many artists relatively isolated by the barrier of language look across the seas to us with envy, little realising that although the ability to express ourselves in English may bring with it some ephemeral fiscal advantages, there is the growing disadvantage of being overloaded with extra weight. Entertainment attacks the citizen from all quarters. It enters his home through the loudspeaker and on the cathode tube. It never leaves him alone. In more spacious days there were great critics who made their splendid and necessary contributions to cultural life, although there have always been those who are notoriously remembered for the obstacles which they have placed in the way of artists who eventually succeeded. Opera after opera, play after play, concerto after concerto, now forming part of the classical repertoire, was condemned at its first appearance. It is consequently understandable that a composer or a writer allows failure to go to his head. He is inevitably flattered after a disaster to find himself in such exalted company.

In the times before indiscriminate entertainment was unleashed, when there was no fear of thoughtful solicitude, when art was uncomplicated and communities were happily decentralised, it was the privilege of the true expert to call an artist an ass. Nowadays the cry springs angrily from the swarm of flies who break their febrile flight upon his back. The modern ass carries extra weight, and needs a thicker skin. And how about the size of his brain? Does it suffer as a consequence? No time, no time to find out.

INTERVIEW WITH FLAHERTY

Penelope Houston



He says he is unable to escape from work that should be over and done with. This is the price of independence; it is no light price, and it is bound to colour his outlook. He is an artist who has found it necessary to learn to talk like a business man, an idealist who cannot escape from the balance sheet. Flaherty looks rather like one of the massive, impressive, almost self-consciously patriarchal figures from one of his own films (the father in *Louisiana Story*, perhaps); he talks with a leisurely determination that reminds one he has spent most of his life making himself understood in the more primitive parts of the world.

Flaherty became a director almost by accident, and he remains, he says, "an explorer first and a film maker second"—although he is quick to add that "explorer" covers an attitude of mind, that he could make an explorer's film about London. His film career began in 1919 when, as a professional explorer, he made an expedition into the far North to investigate mining possibilities. He took a camera, shot a good deal of film and returned to New York to edit it. The first film never reached the screen; its amateur director lit a cigarette in the cutting room and walked out undamaged through the burning celluloid. He went back to the Arctic to make *Nanook*, the first documentary film, which set him the standard and the pattern to which he has since kept. As he has always done, he explored first and recorded second. When making his second film, *Moana*, he lived for two years among the South Sea Islanders, and he tried to concentrate into the film everything he had learnt during the two years: he describes it as the greatest experience of his career. Flaherty's next three films, *Tabu* (the second South Sea film, made with Murnau), *Man of Aran*, and *Elephant Boy* (made with Korda, and the only one of his films seriously compromised by commercial interests) were similar in theme to the first two. They all represented the struggle of primitive man to come to terms with his environment.

Flaherty, as he says, made these films because he was by nature an explorer. He was interested in the conditions and peoples that he filmed and the themes were inevitably alike because the necessities of primitive life do not change. His method was to live among the people, to find a story, and in filming to concern himself as much with the mood he was trying to convey as with strict factual accuracy. Like all artists, he believes that distortion is sometimes necessary to bring out the truth of a scene.

In 1939 Flaherty turned to something new. He directed a long documentary called *The Land*, seen by very few people in this country, for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He describes this film as an extension into documentary of the *Grapes of Wrath* situation: the suffering brought by mechanization to the people of the country. Where the Ford-Steinbeck film showed the retreat from the machine, Flaherty showed the efforts to come to terms with the enemy, to live with it. Flaherty's career has been remarkably free from outside influences, but he says that more than anything else he has been influenced by the Russian cinema of the twenties: it would be interesting to see how he handled a theme so familiar on the Russian

NO ARTISTIC REPUTATION is indestructible. But in the temperamental, irritable, shifting film world, the nearest thing to an indestructible reputation belongs, by a typical paradox, to the man who has never directed in a studio, who has made the fewest films, the least noise, and the least money—to Robert Flaherty. Flaherty is a curiosity in this world; in a career of nearly thirty years he has made only seven full length films, he has suffered an unequalled series of near-disastrous financial crises and, although John Grierson coined the word "documentary" to describe his work, his direct influence on documentary development has been surprisingly slight. He remains the great individualist of the cinema. By all the odds, Flaherty should be remembered only as an old-fashioned, impecunious eccentric, turning up from the wilds every few years with a film altogether devoid of fashionable influences; a figure to be patronized by critics and ignored by audiences. That this is not the case, that his reputation is now at its height, is a justification at once of the serious cinema, and of Robert Flaherty.

Recently, Mr. Flaherty has been in this country to arrange for the distribution of *Louisiana Story*. This in itself sets him apart from the studio director. Flaherty cannot afford the luxury of living in the future; he has to sell his own films, to carry them round with him, to cut them for the exigencies of the double-feature programme,



"Moana," Flaherty's study of South Sea Islanders, which he describes as the greatest experience of his career.



Joseph Boudreaux, the twelve-year-old hero of "Louisiana Story."



Eskimo children: "Nanook of the North."



"Tabu."

screen. The film was too pessimistic (with reason, says Flaherty) for authority; coming to his subject as usual with no preconceived ideas, he saw either more or less than the experts. It is significant, no doubt, that Henry Wallace was at the Department of Agriculture at that time.

Louisiana Story, Flaherty's latest film, is the one he has most enjoyed making. If he had not said so, one might have guessed it from the film's serenity and simplicity. If the theme of the early films was conflict, Flaherty seems at least to have resolved it satisfactorily in his own mind.

He is uncertain about the future; he remains first and last an explorer, but he has no objection to making a film about less primitive people, and their efforts to adjust themselves to modern society. If he did make such a film, it would be on his own terms. Whatever he does, Flaherty insists that he must get to know his subject first, however long it may take.

Flaherty's career, which appears now so shiningly successful, has also been a record of frustrations and disasters which reflect the struggles of the whole serious cinema. He believes that there are three hopes for the future and, being an optimist, he believes that the cinema will rise from its present depression as it has before. He is sure that audiences for good films exist, and that they can be reached—if only the industrial machine will gear itself to the selling of more than one type of product. He believes that exhibitors and audiences can be educated, and that television may help (especially in America) by bringing rubbish into the home and sending people out for quality entertainment. His second ideal is the lowering of costs: he will not be happy until anyone can go out with a camera and shoot a film. This, of course, was his own way, and he believes that it is the best way to learn. Meanwhile,

he sees intelligent patronage as the only hope for documentary, and regrets that so little patronage even approaches the intelligent. He has, he says, been luckier than most (his co-operation with firms such as Standard Oil, who financed *Louisiana Story*, has been markedly successful, although he has a sneaking grudge against the Irish government, who might have financed *Man of Aran*—"a great tourist draw", he remarks). Like most documentary workers, Flaherty is still slightly shocked at the collapse of the Russian cinema, which he blames on "the damn bureaucracy" that tangles up any enterprise in which the artist depends on public money.

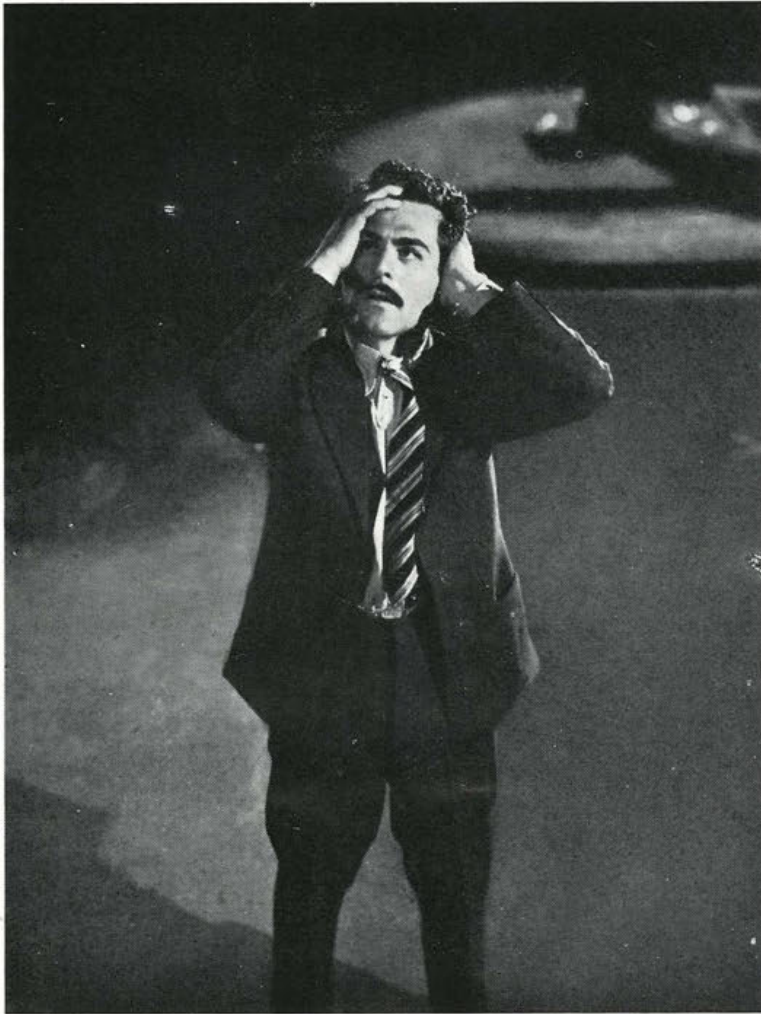
Flaherty likes to describe the cinema as a simple art form; he dislikes attempts to compare the film with play or novel, but thinks that if comparisons are necessary, they should be with painting. Perhaps for this reason he believes that the "intellectual" approach, the exploration of complexity of character, should be left to the novel, and that films should concern themselves rather with what is seen and felt. He talks with fascination of a film in which the movement of a humming bird's wings is photographed—slow motion carried to such an extent that time may be said to have stopped—and of the filming of surgical operations. For him the film is first and foremost a means of communication existing to show us things we have never seen, or things we know as we have never been able to see them.

Meanwhile, "all the reputation in the world won't buy anyone a ham sandwich", and he refuses to talk of a future so dependent on circumstances. We may regret this dependence but, in sympathising with Flaherty, we are wasting time: he has made the films he wanted to make, and will go on making them.

Critics' Forum

"GIVE US THIS DAY"

Richard Winnington



"Give Us This Day." Sam Wanamaker as Geremio.



"Give Us This Day." The death of Geremio.

FROM THE DAY he arrived in England, trailing the glamour of his indictment, Edward Dmytryk has been steadily built into a small legend. British technicians dazzled by a combination of flair, instinct and easy efficiency by no means rare inside the B belt of Hollywood where Dmytryk learned his trade, critics moved by his victimisation into overestimating both *Crossfire* and his contribution to it, and others merely taken by his charm and enthusiasm, have pushed the legend along.

Two things surprised me about Dmytryk when I first met him: his insistence on making "Christ in Concrete" if not in America, in England (despite the fact that better stories had been suggested to him) and his meagre knowledge of the noteworthy achievements of the last ten years of the cinema, for which he offered no real excuse. The compactness and vigour of *Crossfire*, for which Dmytryk is

generally credited, owed as much at least to Adrian Scott, the producer, and John Paxton, the writer. With *Give Us This Day*—Messrs. Geiger and Bronsten can be considered as producers only in the commercial sense, and Ben Barzman's script is an obvious deficit—Dmytryk is on his own with Pietro di Donato. And in those conditions he has done no more than I, for one, anticipated with a story that is sticky with contrivance and forced symbolism. Donato's "Christ in Concrete" is a dated and unhappy crossbreed of American shockeroo writing and Italian poetising about breasts and thighs, hunger and love and childbirth, strung to a sensational allegory of Brooklyn bricklaying in the Great Depression as a climax to which the central character, Geremio, is impaled, emasculated and suffocated in wet concrete on a Good Friday in the attitude of crucifixion. The film stretches the agony even

further by giving the widow 1,000 dollars compensation—the purchase price of the house she and Geremio had been vainly trying to buy during their nine years of marriage.

Using but one Italian (Lea Padovani) in the half American, half British cast, and not more than half a dozen back projections of New York, Dmytryk has created history by acceptably creating in an alien studio the atmosphere of a particular locality of his own country, a feat that has defied some notable European directors in Hollywood. The film opens promisingly with Geremio staggering drunkenly home, too late for the birthday feast prepared by his fading wife and family, and in a fit of angry guilt striking her for the first time in their married life. Outside again, he smashes down his hand on to a spike iron railing and repairs to his mistress for comfort and some heavy talk about the purpose of life. Flashback to the young Geremio in prosperous times (1920, when bricklayers were allowed to work one week in three) discussing the philosophy of Love and Life on top of a building with his four Italian buddies (they were like “five sticks in a bundle”) and deciding to import his beautiful bride from Italy. All through the film is clotted with this verbal imagery, overlaid by the unavoidable music of Benjamin Frankel, and it is only in the *simplest* scenes which stress in *simple* terms of the cinema the minutiae of poverty and love, that we are at all powerfully moved. When Geremio brings home the bonus and Annunziata chalks another twenty dollars towards the house on the wall of their tenement flat, or when she refuses a doctor (because he will cost money) in the agony of her first confinement, the film is momentarily released from its fictional prison house. These and some minor sequences make it clear that with the right producer and with his hair up, Dmytryk might make some first class films in England or anywhere.

Dmytryk insisted on cutting *Give Us This Day* himself and he has left in at least three spare reels. But no amount



“Give Us This Day.” Geremio is dead; his family can move into the new house. Lea Padovani (left), Charles Goldner (centre).

of trimming could affect the film’s unsatisfactory structure. What could be done, without leaving an inexplicable gap, with the dreary episodes concerning Geremio’s golden hearted and faithful mistress (Kathleen Ryan) whose significance is as obscure as her occupation? Unless, I hate to suggest this possibility, it’s another slice of religious allegory.

Without Lea Padovani (Annunziata) whom I saw looking quite different in Vergano’s *Il Sole Sorge Ancora*, the film would have lost most of its warmth. Apart from Kathleen Ryan, Charles Goldner’s organ-grinding portrayal of an elderly Italian bricklayer and a Hollywood trip among loveable wops at the wedding breakfast, the cast fits painlessly into the creditable Italian-Brooklyn background. Painlessly, but in no way memorably, unless it were for the tight characterisation of an ambitious contractor from Sidney James. Sam Wanamaker as Geremio symbolises Dmytryk’s failure: virile, often touching, he never acquires the tragic status that might have saved the film, as one likes to imagine Henry Fonda would have done.

It is said that, and I don’t doubt it, *Give Us This Day* if shot exclusively in a Hollywood, instead of a British, studio would have had no more, probably less, veraciousness. But it clamours for the sort of space that cannot be contrived in a studio and only a concentrated narrative development could have made us oblivious to that lack. *Give Us This Day* is still a respectable and, in the circumstances, courageous British film, well photographed and lit, though not endowed, except in small aspects, with the visual rewards we can still find in less worthy movies. The film means more to Dmytryk than a challenge to his persecutors in America, it is also his conception of a challenge to society, springing from the (to us) half-baked liberalism that in America classified him as an odious and unspeakable “Red.” Looked at in that light *Give Us This Day* is a bolder effort than I can fancy any of our British primadonnas undertaking. Dmytryk also probably thinks that he has created poetry on the screen and there a more serious immaturity is disclosed.



Edward Dmytryk directs Philo Hauser, Bonar Colleano and Charles Goldner in “Give Us This Day.”

HERE TODAY...

THE SEARCH (M.G.M., American). A moving film about the plight of displaced children in Germany. The story centres on a nine-year-old Czech boy whose memory has become deranged after separation from his mother in a concentration camp. He is befriended by an American soldier, gradually learns to respond again to life, and is at last reunited with his mother. Although *The Search* is at times clumsily told—the opening scenes have a distracting commentary, the closing ones some unnecessarily prolonged contrivance—there is real compassion and tenderness in Fred Zinneman's treatment, a performance of extraordinary pathos by Ivan Jandl as the child. Montgomery Clift as the American and Aline MacMahon as an U.N.R.R.A. officer also play with great sympathy.



"*The Search.*" Ivan Jandl and Montgomery Clift.

HOME OF THE BRAVE (United Artists, American). The first of several American pictures to come on the subject of racial intolerance: the story of a hyper-sensitive young negro assigned to a special mission during the war with four white soldiers, his grief over the death of one of them, resulting in paralysis which is cured by psychiatric treatment. Produced by Stanley Kramer, scripted (from a stage play) by Carl Foreman, directed by Mark Robson—the team responsible for *Champion*—it is a well made, superficially outspoken film, at times given a quality superior to its conception by the impassioned playing of James Edwards as the negro.

THE FILE ON THELMA JORDON (Paramount, American). A melodrama, slow-moving and unpromising for the first half-hour, that develops an ingenious situation in which an attorney implicated in a crime has to prosecute the real criminal in court. Excellent acting by Wendell Corey and Barbara Stanwyck: the invariably accomplished Robert Siodmak directs.

THE BIG STEAL (R.K.O., American). A rather gay comedy-thriller, built round a triple car-chase from one end of Mexico to the other to recover a stolen pay-roll. Genuine locations and capable performances by Robert Mitchum and Jane Greer. Directed by Don Siegel.

THE VELVET TOUCH (R.K.O., American). Rosalind Russell as a Broadway actress provoked into murdering her producer, who will not allow her to switch from comedy to *Hedda Gabler*. Indifferently written, flatly directed (by John Gage), and notable chiefly for a splendid performance by Sidney Greenstreet as a police inspector.

PRINCE OF FOXES (Fox, American). A laborious charade in cloak-and-dagger Italy, with Orson Welles relishing the part of an evil Borgia. Direction by Henry King, romantic decorations by Tyrone Power and Wanda Hendrix.

UNDER CAPRICORN (Warners, British). The latest Hitchcock, in the latest Hitchcock manner—heavy but hollow, and expensive-looking. A lengthy novelette set in Australia in the 1960's, with Ingrid Bergman (as an Irish dipsomaniac), Joseph Cotten, Michael Wilding and some ten-minute takes.

LES AMANTS DE VERONE (Polytechnic, French). Romeo and Juliet in present-day Verona. The young understudies of two not-so-young stars engaged to make a film of Shakespeare's play on the actual locations, fall in love and re-enact the drama: a balcony scene during lighting tests, a final death on the tomb. Jacques Prévert's script is brilliant, there are some good performances—Pierre Brasseur, Serge Reggiani, Anouk Aimée—but the film is unfortunate in mediocre direction (André Cayatte.)

UNE SI JOLIE PETITE PLAGE (Films de France). A young man with a past arrives to stay at a little hotel on the North coast of France, after the season has ended, when the rains have set in and the streets are melancholy. The reasons for his nervousness and solitude are gradually disclosed; after a platonic idyll with the hotel maid, the police arrive, and the past tragically overtakes the present. In spite of Yves Allegret's masterly atmospheric direction and the acting of Gérard Philipe and Madeleine Robinson, the film cannot but appear a slender exercise in a familiar convention.

L'AIGLE A DEUX TETES (Studio One, French). Cocteau's pedestrian screen transcription of his own Ruritanian barnstormer, seen on the stage here with Eileen Herlie. Edwige Feuillère plays the lonely Queen with equal virtuosity and a far easier grace: Marais broods indefinitely as the doomed poet. Love and death and lavish upholstery.

ACTING

Philip Hope-Wallace

A BLINDING GLIMPSE of the obvious is sometimes a wholesome purge. If the following seems but a series of truisms to hardened cineasts it is fair to remember that the public mind is generally in a great state of confusion on the subject of film acting—as well it might be, what with the old categories seemingly breaking down, the stage using film techniques, the cinema camera, abrogating all its former powers of editorship and prowling about after the actors for endless ‘ten-minute-takes,’ for all the world like an importunate autograph hunter; and in the background, the new menace of a special television technique, somewhere between stage and screen, serving up all manner of half-baked conduct, for which ‘acting’ is the only term available, in the very sanctum of our hearths.

It is, alas, true that many film critics appear not to notice themselves whether an effect is one introduced by the actor as an active agent, or whether the effect is produced by the director of the film as ‘editor’ using material provided by an actor in a purely passive capacity. (If only we had a word for the antithesis of ‘acting,’ a word like ‘passiving’!) It is of course the very first critical distinction which must be drawn, this distinction between the active role of the director, the active and the passive co-operation of the player, just as important as the distinction (not easy for children or inexperienced people) to be made between the intrinsic worth of a role and its execution. Such people naturally find it even harder to distinguish between what is mere personality or natural endowment (Betty Grable, Jane Russell) and what is the extension of personality either by the conscious art of the actor (Bette Davis) or the subsequent handling of a director (e.g., the mutilated ex-sailor in *The Best Years of Our Lives*, who without acting experience of any kind was made, by William Wyler, to appear to ‘act’ alongside a cast containing such first-rate active players as Myrna Loy and Fredric March).

The last word, of course, is with the director, a thing recognised by anyone who watches many films intelligently. On the stage your *great* actor can by virtue of his own talent give a *great* performance however little help he gets adventitiously; (*Lear* in a blitzed drill-hall). But on the screen the actor is utterly at the mercy of the director who can reduce to triviality the finest acting, even as he can make the dullest actor (and even the inanimate object, e.g., that sudden, hair-raising shot of the telephone about to start ringing) *appear* to act, in the fullest sense of the word. A wonderfully calculated imitation of behaviour may end up totally ineffective; a chance gesture of pity in a newsreel might do the trick again and again. Compare the ineffectiveness of Sarah Bernhardt in an ancient two-reeler blowing great flailing kisses of adieu to a beloved table; and in the famous newsreel, the stranger’s hand which with compassion lifts off the pince-nez of the assassinated Alexander of Yugoslavia.

Perhaps the point might be made even clearer if we have recourse to an example from the ballet, a precisely measureable art. Let us suppose a British ballerina called Noisette de Veau whose art on the stage, or in class, is



“Conscious art . . .” Bette Davis

exactly calculable; her *developpé* is too rapid, no getting away from that; her *ballon*, or power of elevation, on the other hand, are sensational. Now imagine her in a film. By concentrating on the wrong thing at the wrong moment the camera may of course make complete nonsense of her art. But conversely, what can the camera not do to this same (stage) art? Mlle. de Veau’s *developpé* may appear on the screen to be of a breathtaking slowness and languor; her elevation may exceed anything we have hitherto imagined her capable of; her whole technique may appear immensely, ideally transformed. If anyone had difficulty in seizing the idea of the *active* role of the camera eye, the homely illustration of Miss de Veau may give help. Once that distinction is realised the filmgoer no longer puts all acting on a long descending scale of merit: “I liked *him*, I liked *her*.” Sir Laurence Olivier and Miss Anna Neagle will no doubt continue to give what are voted The Best Performances of the Year but they will not merely be lumped together. It will be appreciated that there are differences, not merely in degree but radical differences in kind, between the acting of (say) Charlie Chaplin, Anna Magnani, Bette Davis, Joseph Cotten or Humphrey Bogart, or the little boy, Bobby Henrey, who ‘acted’ so marvellously in Carol Reed’s *The Fallen Idol*. It will be appreciated that there are at least two kinds of acting; active and passive. And that what may seem most active may be most passive in reality, and vice versa. When that is established there is a basis for criticism. If not, all discussion of screen performances—and later I hope to write of outstanding recent ones—is vain, a mere bandying of personalities, likes and dislikes and ending in the kind of confusion which rates *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* as ‘greater art’ than *Madame Bovary* because it did more good. But discussion of Flaubert’s great book, recently put upon the screen and ‘acted,’ must be a subject for another article.

MUSIC

Antony Hopkins

BEFORE EMBARKING ON my duties as Film Music Critic, I feel that I should make it clear that I am going to interpret this somewhat imposing title with a considerable degree of latitude. Perhaps a better name would be sound-track critic; for a really imaginative use of sound—effects, dialogue, music and (oh! how welcome) silence—can make a world of difference to an otherwise undistinguished film. There is a convention among the dinner-jacketed tribe of cinema managers that on no account must the ears of the customers be left unassailed for even a moment. My fellow-critics are perhaps rather less aware of this, because much of their film-going is done in the morning, often in small intimate theatres with small intimate audiences. Even there, the ubiquitous panatrophe starts its monotonous blare a few minutes before the lights go down; but we are usually given Gems from the Classics instead of Silvestriana. In fact, the biggest danger of film music, and a danger to which this dread of silence contributes a great deal, is that our ears, forced by these repeated assaults to immunize themselves completely against sound, will ultimately debase the whole of the musical currency. So many thousands of pages of wonderfully scored music are churned out over the year, that we cease to be affected at all, except by the most carefully prepared sequences.

The much discussed zither music in *The Third Man*, which made such a sensation that it was actually mentioned favourably by several of the film critics was, as music, both trite and commonplace in the extreme. Had it been orchestrated, however consummately, even the average cinema-goer would have felt it to be inadequate. But the true genius of Carol Reed showed itself when he realised that the zither, as sheer sound, was something fresh enough and new enough to excite the listener's interest and attention whatever the quality of the music it played. This subtlety of taste is something that few directors have; yet how tremendously effective it can be is shown by the fact that we remember certain sound sequences in films whose music has faded completely from the mind. I have no recollection of what the music for *Queen of Spades* was like, or even who wrote it; but I have only to shut my eyes to be able to recapture instantly the sound of Edith Evans' huge stiff crinoline dragging across the marble floor of the Opera house, punctuated by the dry tap of her stick. Now I do not think I am being harsh with Thorold Dickinson when I say that had he not wanted to plant that sound in our minds, so that it could be used later on in the "visitation" scene, he might not have used that particular effect at all. Dame Edith would have limped across the hall, and even had the sound of her dress and stick been audible there would have been the usual rhubarbia clatrap in the background. Why? Such a sound is fascinating and exciting enough in itself; I had no idea, on first hearing it, that it was to be used again, yet it made that particular moment of the film arresting and beautiful.

At the risk of seeming to be a bore, I will say quite frankly that this need for the cultivation of a really discriminating sound palate will be my permanent hobby-

horse. As a case in point, let us look for a moment at the only film-score by a world-name in music that I have seen these last few weeks—Aaron Copland's music to *The Red Pony*. Here we have a score full of charming touches and gloriously free from the thick glossy-magazine-finished sound that the Hollywood arrangers so love to produce. Yet at a rough guess the first music cue is at least seven minutes long. It is as though Milestone had said, "Well, we've got this guy Copland—the top composer in the States—so let's give him a lotta opportunities. Classy picture; we'll give the customers a heap of good music." The result is that the ear (having been well prepared by five minutes of Kostelanetz-cum-Silvester, the stentorian voice and crisis music of the newsreel, the second feature packed with action drama and thrills, and the high-powered trailer music) is completely sated with musical sound long before the film is over. One enjoys touches, like the small boy walking through the dust beating a tin box; gradually the dead percussive thump merges into the more cultivated beat of the orchestral timpani. This is imaginative and well contrived; but half its effectiveness is lost by the fact that the previous music cue has only finished a moment earlier. If we are to appreciate this sort of sound effect to the full, our aural perception must be sharpened and expectant, not dulled by satiety.

The two most exciting tracks that I have heard recently were in *Le Tempestaire* and the unnoticed but surely brilliantly made *Three Dawns to Sydney*. The French film was arty-crafty in the extreme, but with what a superbly orchestrated mélange of sound—voices, wind, sea and the sad chromatic wailings of the Ondes Martinot. I was interested to see on the credit-titles the words "Partition sonore—Yves Baudrier." I may be misinterpreting the French, but I suspect that this means that the composer was entrusted throughout with the supervision of the sound-track. How different such a practice is from the normal; yet what should be so extraordinary about it? A cameraman can be a real artist; but in most cases the blending of the sound-track is in the hands of recording engineers who, however skilful they may be, are hardly likely to have the subtlety of perception and imagination of a composer.

Three Dawns to Sydney was another example of the refreshing quality of unusual sound. We heard strange evocative Indian and Chinese music; music which, especially in the Indian childbirth sequence, made my hair stand on end with excitement, such was the extraordinary novelty and mystery. It was an odd coincidence that this film should have gone the rounds with *The Third Man*. What with Anton Karas' zither and the unidentified instruments of the East, it was quite an evening. My ears have not so pricked since the animal-like screams of the clanging sinuous drills in *Louisiana Story*.

Two last notes on moments of delight: the startled reaction of my neighbours to the riotous guffaw I could not restrain on seeing the titles of *The Three Musketeers*—"Music by Herbert Stothart with themes by Tchaikowsky." Never have credit titles been so unintentionally frank.

Secondly, a small bouquet to the manager of the Queen's Cinema, Bayswater. I dropped in the other day during the interval and was struck by the relaxed hush and the feeling of peace. The reason? Instead of the usual jangle or plush, we were privileged to hear Solomon's superbly tranquil recording of the Brahms B flat Minor Intermezzo. And the curious thing was that everyone was listening—for once.

FESTIVALS : A Summing-Up

Still, from a prestige point of view, the Cinderella of the arts and despised or genially patronised by many of the illustrious, the cinema seems to be releasing its inhibitions about all this in a series of Festivals notable for their atmosphere of luxury, their classy clientele, the babel of international critics, the liberal talk of art and the issuing of some peculiar awards—including a special "entertainment" prize for our own *Adam and Eve*. This happened early in the year at Locarno, one of the "mushroom" festivals—of which others have sprung up at Mariánské Lázně in Czechoslovakia (a field-day for the Left) and at Knokke in Belgium, to which Italy fortunately sent *Bicycle Thieves* and more or less saved the day. With so many festivals, of course, quality is bound to suffer; countries hold back potential prizewinners for the biggest and best, Venice and Cannes, and even then there is not always enough to go round: which explains the presence of *Blue Lagoon* at Venice.

These four reports, all from different points of view, emphasise that now is the time to reconsider the whole question of festivals, not only to comment on the surfeit of them. James Beveridge, of the Canadian Film Board, writes on the only non-competitive festival, Edinburgh; Catherine de la Roche discusses Cannes; Clive Donner, a young technician working in British films, summarises his impressions of Venice; and Alan Brien, invited as a student to the Biarritz festival, describes an original and amusing project of showing films (commercial and independent-experimental) that have been denied general distribution.

EDINBURGH James Beveridge

WHAT A LOT of film there is in the world! The documentary stream has become a flood. The swelling quantity, and the patchy quality, suggest that producers had best look thoughtfully about them and trim their canoes, so to speak, before plunging on down-stream. One week of film-going at Edinburgh, during the summer's festival, provided ample evidence of the groupings and seekings, the flights and failures, that are common to all countries where documentary production has got a foothold.

There is the wandering travelogue, the spare instructional film, the long "short-feature" lacking in substance or tensile strength; there are flashes of excitement from camerawork that sees freshly and keenly, from film stories that are taut and economical and balanced, structurally sound and true.

Not so much of the last, however. The missing quality is this tightness, sureness, point and edge. What are all these films, each one of them, there for? What is their point? Whom do they speak to? The fierce, uncompromising experimental film can stand up for itself; the unclear, untidy, ill-defined, not-thought-out documentary film cannot. It is a pushover. It staggers and stumbles and knocks itself out, finally, by its own fumbling. A radio producer said, at the end of a long morning's show, "They're all so bad. And they're all so long."

This is one sombre colour in the mixed pattern of change and development in "documentary" films, both long and short. But there is also excellence to be found, and when it is found, there is a high pleasure to it that is unique and distinctive with documentary.

There is the beauty of perception in some of them. The woodcarving film, *Ad Dei Honorem*, inspects with huge close-ups the marvellous carvings, saints and angels, of a medieval altar piece. *Shapes and Forms*, which is just that, studies the pure form of masks and statuary in primitive and modern art, with shifting light and movement; this is something that the camera can communicate directly. *The Refugee Problem* is again pure camera, observation, of people and their bafflement, fatigue, and rootless wandering through a disintegrated homeland.

There are new examples of the application of documentary. *The Valley Is Ours*—too long, perhaps, but a moving film, with great breadth, and a feeling for real countryside and for people who live in a place and have their roots there. It is a good example of work coming from a new documentary group (Australia), tackling too much, spilling over at the edges, but with all the signs of craftsmanship,

sympathy, and the real passion and concern for film itself, without which no documentary really lives at all. *Feeling All Right* is an exciting film, in its way. One feels that the producers have written and executed a film with Negro actors with skill and sympathy, for Negro audiences, to accomplish a specific objective in the public-health field. There is no talking-down, no dullness, no shabbiness in the execution of this clear-cut documentary from Mississippi. It seems to show that the best "functional" documentary is the one which goes first to its audiences.

Unhampered by competitive interests and irrelevant social functions, Edinburgh provided a chance, not just for enthusiasts to see all kinds of movies, but for film people themselves to meet and exchange points of view. This is a precious privilege for the documentary filmmaker, and for all those other active agents who are concerned with the use of film in the broad fields of education. One hopes that there will be a continuing arrangement providing for effective liaison between such people, during future festivals; it is too valuable an opportunity to lose.

CANNES

Catherine de la Roche

WITH THE INAUGURATION of the Palais des Festivals at Cannes, this fashionable Mediterranean resort makes a bid to become a cultural centre, and its film festival is established as a permanent institution. Government departments, film organisations, and the several industries connected with tourism spared no effort or expense; the hospitality was lavish. Socially the cinema has indeed made the grade. Starting among the "lower orders," taken up in turn by the *nouveaux riches*, the middle classes, the aesthetes and intellectuals, the cinema now holds festivals that are patronised by ministers of state and religion, duchesses and nabobs.

Much was said at Cannes about encouraging film art; much was done to stimulate commerce. And there were at least four main aspects to the whole affair: exhibition, publicity, rendezvous and competition. I put competition last, because with the growing number of festivals their significance in this respect is dwindling. The best pictures are dispersed, gaps are filled with second best, standards become uneven. Understandably much was said about the need for international co-ordination; another limitation was the refusal of the U.S.S.R. and Czechoslovakia to participate.

Nevertheless, with 24 nations taking part, the Cannes festival was the biggest of the year. If standards were uneven, the selections were probably more typical of each country's average production, and there was an opportunity to see pictures from those where moviemaking has only recently begun: passionate, if propagandist, films from Yugoslavia and Israel, for instance, and the Egyptian *Adventures of Anta and Abba*, an heroic legend full of exuberance and, alas, of clichés from the older film producing countries—a reminder of the appalling pervasiveness of formula-film jargon.

With the survival of most nations' film industries depending on export, the festival's shopwindow aspect cannot be ignored. Prices, it is true, made it a *de luxe* shopwindow, accessible only to delegates and the rich, and there was more than a hint of snobbery. Champagne suppers, the Bal Blanc and Nuit Bleue were no more than elegant versions of familiar tie-ups and exploitation angles. As publicity all this served its purpose, for V.I.P.s from inside and outside the industry turned up in force, focusing attention on themselves and on the cinema.

As a rendezvous for film folk this year's festival gave only a glimpse of what is intended when the conference and club rooms in the palais are completed. Jean Benoit-Lévy gave an informative talk about U.N.O.'s aims in stimulating independent production of films on vital subjects; Louis Daquin (director of *Nous les Gosses*) launched a vigorous discussion on the French film industry whose problems, it emerged, were shared by most European countries; and Carol Reed, quite a lionised figure these days, had a lively press conference on *The Third Man*. For the rest, there were brief meetings with such brilliant speakers as Claude Autant-Lara and Jacques Becker and, of course, small talk at parties with writers, directors and critics whom one longed to hear in thoroughgoing discussions on their respective subjects. This side of the festival might be vastly extended.

Of the films in the competition the general impression was: some good, but no real masterpieces. Most of the best did figure on the list of awards, though not necessarily on the right places on that list. My own rearranged list would exclude the Mexican *Pueblerina*, repetitive, over-exquisite, and include Thorold Dickinson's loyal, masterly interpretation in sound film terms of Pushkin's *Queen of Spades*, and Jacques Becker's *Rendez-vous de Juillet* which, if only a superficial impression of Saint-Germain-des-Prés student life to-day, was fresh, and spiced with hot rhythm sequences superbly photographed and edited.

The selection of documentaries was disappointing; here the prize-winning pictures were indeed the only noteworthy ones. Jean Mitry's *Pacific 231*, "an audio-visual essay" on Honegger's music, aroused enormous interest and William Novik's *Images Médiévales*, a study of 14th and 15th century customs as revealed in contemporary miniature book illustrations, had wit and charm.

Apart from the films on the award lists, the most successful and widely discussed, it seemed, were those from France and Britain. *Obsession* and *The Passionate Friends* were, no doubt, chiefly responsible for the criticism that, in general, the preoccupation with technique apparent in our films is detrimental. *Passport to Pimlico*, shown outside the competition, scored an unqualified success; and *The Third Man* was an unmistakable triumph before the awards were announced. The British cinema undoubtedly has considerable prestige on the continent;

a good deal, one felt rather uneasily, to live up to.

The French are always their own most exacting critics, and their attitude towards their own films was, if anything, over-scrupulous. Incidentally, there were suggestions in the French Press that in future the jury should be international. This seems a good idea; the Cannes festival, in spite of so much commerce and party going, has its serious side, and was probably the most rewarding of the competitive festivals this year. If a stronger critical balance could be achieved both in selection and judgement, its importance as an artistic event in the future would be assured, and it would not be in danger of going the way that so many other festivals have gone.

VENICE

Clive Donner

IT IS AN UNFORTUNATE FACT that much of the success of festivals has depended upon the degree of social life which takes place, and upon the celebrities who attend. Venice, one of the oldest established festivals, is no exception. This year when the overall standard of the feature films has been poor (the prize-winning film was Clouzot's showy, erratic *Manon*), the Italians have had to fall back upon what celebrities have been present. These, too, have not been as numerous or as interesting as in previous years. The artistic scions of the cinema have either stayed away, or on arrival have retreated to secluded islands in the Lagoon.

A great deal of publicity at home has already been given to the poor standard of British films shown; it is only necessary to add that it is useless to blame the B.F.P.A.'s choice of films, for there have been no other films worthy of entering that were not already being shown at some other festival.

While the majority of public attention has been turned to the lack of inspiration in feature films, the other two principal sections of the festival have been considerably neglected. The Special Sections dealing with scientific, educational, experimental, sport and cultural films had an interesting and varied programme. About eight or nine of these films were shown every morning in the smaller Astra Cinema, and providing that one selected a morning when the programme was well balanced, the hour or two spent there provided some of the most stimulating and interesting cinema of the whole festival. It is interesting to note that although America and Great Britain entered and won more awards for technical and instructional films, it was Italy and France whose films on music, painting and sculpture led the artistic and cultural field, some of them using colour and camerawork to a high degree of imagination. Several of the more exceptional of these were shown at the evening performance in the large Palazzo Cinema. What enthusiasm they did arouse passed mostly unawares over the noise of the inevitable late-comers clamouring for their seats; although in many cases these short films were better artistically, and technically, than the feature films that followed them.

The third section held for the first time as a festival of its own was of International Films for children. These were shown in the afternoon also at the smaller cinema; and for the benefit of the children—whose attendance and enthusiasm far outmeasured their adult counterpart—the original sound-track was turned down sufficiently low to enable an Italian commentator to read the story and dialogue over the sound system. This was quite satisfactory

Some Prize Winners



Joseph Cotten and Valli in Carol Reed's "The Third Man," awarded first prize at Cannes.



Enzo Staiola, the workman's son, in Vittorio de Sica's "Ladri di Biciclette" ("Bicycle Thieves"), which won first prize at Knokke.



Katina Paxinou (murdered), Rosalind Russell and Raymond Massey in Dudley Nichols' version of "Mourning Becomes Electra," prized at Biarritz.



Clouzot's "Manon": a characteristic scene, with Cécile Aubry and Michel Auclair. The film was awarded first prize at the Venice Biennale.

for the children to understand what was happening, but made almost impossible any proper judgment of a film that may have used imaginative music and sound effects on the original track.

Very few countries have sufficiently explored the possibilities and necessities of this very specialised type of film-making. Great Britain, who through G.B.I. has made considerable research in the subject, presented several films made as a result of the experience gained at the children's Saturday morning clubs in England. A study of these child audiences at the Festival will repay the film-makers at home with some idea of how children with a far different background and upbringing react to films made specifically for our own Saturday Club audiences, how they will accept a wider range of subjects and styles than we have been making. For although slapstick—with a touch of sadism—is always a safe ingredient, it is not a good long term policy to which to restrict our child entertainment films. Nor will its continual use help to bring up a generation of more critical and imaginative cinema-goers. It is encouraging that several British observers were present at these children's showings.

The 1948 Biennale at Venice was artistically and socially an outstanding success. This year has been a reaction. It has been treated as a failure, and, judged by the publicists' standard, it was. However, at least it has shown that a continual entry of poor feature films will not draw a festival audience either of socialites, or enthusiasts, and that while so few worthy feature films are being made, the future of the individual festival must be seriously considered.

BIARRITZ

Alan Brien

PERHAPS THE LEAST IMPORTANT INGREDIENTS of a film festival are the films. Prominent in the pages of the glossier magazines are the half-dressed starlets and the overdressed financiers, the publicity hacks and showmen, the indefatigable socialites and first-nighters who couldn't tell James Wong Howe from Anna May Wong, all white-faced and grinning in the glare of the flashlight cameras. Rarely does one see in the wads of gossip reportage any reference to the technicians who actually *make* the films, the script-writers, cameramen, designers and editors, and even the directors are only included when they are spotlighted by current scandal—Rossellini holding Ingrid Bergman's hand, Orson Welles pointedly not holding Rita Hayworth's. Festivals begin and end in the foyers.

The *Festival du Film Maudit* at Biarritz, organised by Jean Cocteau and his passionate group of young cinéastes, *Objectif* 49, was a refreshing exception. Though even here Cocteau's monkey, Zizi, got more publicity than the master himself, and for every paragraph about the films, there were two about Thilda Thamar, a well upholstered blonde tastelessly featured as the Argentinian Atom Bomb, or Nicky Chanière, Miss Cinema 49. But at the Festival itself the accent was entirely on films; Cocteau and Grémillon earnestly talked cinema to noisy groups in private, while André Bazin, of *L'Ecran Français*, and Jean George Auriol, editor of *La Revue du Cinéma*, led the public *débats* before and after the showings. Visitors from Lisbon, Bombay, Paris and Oxford, met like exiles who could once again

speak their native language and on hot starry nights the cafés resounded to the familiar cry, "Did you see . . .?"

Though the Biarritz Festival was not restricted like the others to the films of 1949, it was almost as effectively hamstrung by its own terms of reference. Every film had to be *maudit* (variously interpreted as meaning experimental, unknown in France, and gingerly handled by exhibitors) rather than worth seeing. Quite a few chestnuts worthy of even Miss Lejeune's lap managed by this means to squeeze in. To show only films certified as *maudit* made the Festival as valuable as an anthology of poetry which included only poets who died before they were twenty-five; filling out Keats and Chatterton with the cinematic equivalents of Rupert Brooke and Sidney Keyes, while ignoring Milton, Pope and T. S. Eliot.

If we make a short list of great film-makers, Griffith, Flaherty, Donskoi, Carné, Dreyer, Chaplin, Clair, Renoir, Ford, Eisenstein and Vigo, only the last four were represented and only the latter with his best work. Renoir's *The Southerner* is a moving film with some fine moments, full of warm but controlled performances, but overloaded with specious cracker-barrel philosophising and flawed by an unrealistic and unnecessary (except for box-office) saloon brawl.

The Long Voyage Home is beautifully photographed by Gregg Toland and some of its episodes, notably the arrival of the native girls and the men's final return to the ship, are as good as anything in cinema, but the O'Neill-Dudley Nichols combination inevitably produced long-winded and self-consciously "poetic" dialogue. The vein of sentimentality obviously underground in Ford spouts through the surface at odd moments, giving off a damp warmth like a leaky hot-water bottle. If the unglamourised, realistic treatment of an unpopular theme were needed, surely *The Grapes of Wrath*, with its harsh unflattering light on an American Activity, its natural uncaricatured humour, its rigid honesty, should have been the obvious choice.

On the other hand, the Festival did show Eisenstein's *Time in the Sun*, a fragment of his tremendous, uncompleted Mexico film, which, though necessarily episodic and unequal, has been well edited by Marie Seton. The profile of the bronzed Indian silhouetted against the thousand-year-old Aztec face carved in the rock with a shrivelled palm scarred across the sun, the terrible beauty of the procession of priests, muffled in lawn and lace, led by a naked native dragging a cross, the passionless defiance of the peons digging their own graves, the simple gaiety of the village wedding preparations, are vivid images which needed no commentary. Vigo's *Zéro de Conduite* and *L'Atalante* are the epitome of the genius *maudit* which the Biarritz Festival sought to commemorate, with their irreverent wit, disturbing originality and powerful symbolism; films which expect, and indeed exact, from the audience, quick intelligence and broad human sympathy.

Such films should have been the backbone of a *Festival Maudit*, perhaps with those martyrs of the film hagiarchy, *Le Jour se Lève*, *Pépé le Moko* and *Gaslight*. The film addict's diet was enriched at Biarritz by such delicacies as Visconti's sombre, memorable *Ossessione*, Blasetti's exciting, spectacular black-and-white picture of Garibaldi's invasion, 1860, Pagliero's light and charming *La Nuit Porte Conseil* and Dudley Nichols' highly theatrical *Mourning Becomes Electra*; but it seems a pity that he had to take with them so much tricked-up roughage like *Shanghai Gesture*, *Address Unknown* and *Ride the Pink Horse*.

BOOK REVIEWS

History

The History of the British Film, Vol. II. Rachael Low. (George Allen & Unwin, 21s.)

The second volume of Miss Low's history lives up to expectations and is a worthy successor to the first. I repeat what I wrote after being privileged to read the page-proofs: "The British Film Industry is fortunate indeed to have such an industrious and reliable historian". This again came home to me recently on two occasions. I had reason to do some delving into the first thirty years of the American cinema. Lewis Jacobs's *Rise of the American Film* was, as usual, most helpful as were also the programme notes of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library, but there is nothing comparable with this British history which the British Film Institute first sponsored and with which the British Film Academy is now associated. Terry Ramsaye's *A Million and One Nights* always makes amusing reading but—and this is the second occasion to which I referred above—one cannot help but wonder how balanced and careful he is as an historian when the following appears in the editorial of the *Motion Picture Herald* (20 August, 1949), an American trade journal to which Mr. Ramsaye has contributed trenchant pieces for many years:

"Every once in a while it becomes necessary to tend to the purification of the traditions of the motion picture industry, so continuously under invasion by reckless writers. . . . Just now comes to hand an outgiving by Mr. E. V. Durling, syndicated Hearst columnist, who says to his millions: 'Forgotten man—high on the list of forgotten men is William Friese-Greene. Not one person in 1,000 in Hollywood could tell you who Friese-Greene was. . . . Yet Friese-Greene invented the first practical commercial motion picture camera. . . . A few facts. The man's name was William Green, until he assembled a fancy new version. He got a patent on paper for a gadget which was very far from a 'commercial' motion picture camera. . . . Mr. F.-Greene was brought over to the United States to take the stand and break the Edison patents. After the independents' lawyers looked over the witness and his lack of documentations he was softly sent home. . . . A more recent and searching examination of the Greene career is summarised . . . by Martin Quigley, Jr., who found no triumph in the record. . . ."

All of which brings me back to compliment the author of the book under review upon her calm, unhurried, detached style. As in the first volume, she is not concerned to express opinions in a scholarly work of this kind but to discover and present facts so far as they can be found and checked.

The period dealt with is less important from the point of view of the films produced than from the fact that it was during these years—1906 to 1914—that the structure of the industry as we know it to-day took its original shape. The formation of the first cinema-circuits, a system of booking and showing films to the public that has in

later years had so much influence on the kind of films produced; the events and personalities which led to the establishment in 1913 of the British Board of Film Censors, which we still have with us; and the setting up of such trade bodies as the C.E.A. and the Kinematograph Manufacturers' Association—it is excellent that the detailed events surrounding these turning points in the industry are recorded.

The films themselves of the period are not especially notable in the development of cinema aesthetic, but these sections are nevertheless important and readable. Full information is to be found about the pioneer producers and their companies, some of whose names occurred of course in the first volume—W. G. Barker (of the Warwick Trading Company), the Rosie Film Company with its "*English Art Films*," the Clarendon Film Company with the Marchioness of Townsend as its script-writer, the B. and C. (British and Colonial Kinematograph Company), Sir Hubert Herkomer's Ruritanian-like adventures in the short-lived efforts at "*Lululand*"—they are all here. Fitting tribute is paid to Mr. Cecil Hepworth for his great contribution to the quality and character of British films and to his famous stock company of players, among them Chrissie White, Alma Taylor, Gladys Sylvani, Violet Hopson, Stewart Rome, Alec Worcester and Henry Vibart.

To young readers who are under the impression that London Films began with Alexander Korda, it will come as a surprise that the original London Film Company was created by Dr. R. T. Jupp as one of the major production concerns before the first World War, although it sustained contemporary criticism for employing too many makers of films either of American nationality or American born. London Films brought to the screen Henry Ainley, Cyril Maude, Mary Brough, Lillian Logan, Charles Rock, Gerald Ames, Franklyn and George Bellamy, Edna Flugarth, Frank Stanmore, Sir Herbert Tree and Langhorne Burton among others, produced and/or directed by George L. Tucker, Harold Shaw and Arthur Holmes-Gore. (How well one remembers *Quinneys* and *The Prisoner of Zenda* and Lewis Waller in *Beau Brocade* with the coconut shells for hooves, but these will presumably come into the next volume!). A most interesting section of the book is a detailed analysis of three outstanding films—*Richard III* (1911) produced by the F. R. Benson Company, *East Lynne* (1913) produced by Barker, and *David Copperfield* (1913) produced by Thomas Bentley for Hepworth. I hope the author will continue this idea of analysis breakdown in her next volume, if only of sequences within a film.

There is one point of criticism that I should like to make: that is the poor selection of the illustrations. They are, in fact, restricted to cine-enlargements from the three films chosen for analysis mentioned above, and this, I suggest, is a mistake. I should have liked to see portraits of the well-known producers and players of the time, production stills, photographs of studios and of typical "bijou palaces", of contemporary posters and so on. In a guinea book, one expects a greater variety than twenty blocks devoted wholly to three films, especially when many of the 51 stills com-

prising the twenty blocks are pretty dull. For the record and future editions of the book, there is one small printer's error on page 270; *Documentary News Letter*, Vol. 2, No. 1, was obviously 1941 and not 1914. The book is naturally a British Film Academy recommendation and should be in the possession of all either in or interested in the industry.

PAUL ROTH.

Novels

The Margin. J. D. Scott. (Pilot Press, 1949.) 8s. 6d.

The Little Sister. Raymond Chandler. (Hamish Hamilton, 1949.) 8s. 6d.

The Last Tycoon. F. Scott Fitzgerald. (Grey Walls Press, 1949.) 8s. 6d.

Two of these novels are not primarily concerned with the world of the cinema, but touch on it at several points, illustrating yet again the confusion that overcomes quite competent writers when they venture across its frontier. *The Margin*, an English novel, is a love-story, told drily and unromantically, of a girl working in the Civil Service and a young film director: both touchy, self-examining, uncertain creatures. With the Civil Service, Mr. Scott is clearly writing about people he knows; the satire is tinged with respect, the portraits are sometimes forbidding but not wholly unsympathetic, and this part of the book is convincingly done. But the figures of the director and his entourage (which includes a neurotic, pampered producer called Rex von Hartman) are utterly unreal, like the snatches of "serious" conversation about films—enthusiasts rattling earnestly away about Pudovkin and Grierson in the same breath. The conception of the film director's character remains incongruously novelettish, rather like the treatment of artists in Hollywood films.

The Hollywood of Raymond Chandler's new novel, *The Little Sister*, is clearly the result of disgust and disillusion (as with nearly all the *milieux* he depicts). It is also unexpectedly crude, peopled almost exclusively by nymphomaniacs, murderous blonde starlets, and sinister publicity agents. The gifted writer who has done well in Hollywood, but with a sense of guilt, is probably not the best person to write about it—not too soon, anyway; and Chandler, like Graham Greene, is not only fascinated by what he condemns but owes his literary method in part to the cinema. (*The Little Sister*, not one of his best stories has many of the clichés and concoctions of his imitators.)

On a different level, Scott Fitzgerald's last unfinished novel, now published for the first time over here, suggests what a wealth of material Hollywood offers to the writer who can keep his head about it. Fitzgerald had written only about half of *The Last Tycoon* when he died, but a synopsis of the rest exists and is included in this edition. The portrait of Starr, the self-made, lonely, enormously successful producer, is in essence remarkable, and the fact that he does not emerge as a complete figure is due to the state of the work, not its conception. The novel is constructed on the same lines as *The Great Gatsby*: the narrator (this time a rather frighteningly corrupted adolescent girl, daughter of another producer) introduces Starr gradually, establishing him through direct observa-

tion, fragments of gossip, the confidences of friends and enemies. With his absence of education but naive respect for it, his instinctive flair for the craft and intrigue of picture-making, his ruthlessness and his fundamental simplicity, Starr is a sketch for a fascinating, many-sided figure. Had he been developed further, he would surely have been as representative of his place and era as Gatsby of New York in the 'twenties.

Remembering the rich gallery of portraits which the growth of commerce stimulated in European fiction in the last century, and remembering also Isherwood's recent comparison of the film industry, its world of intrigue and *volte-face*, to a Renaissance court, one does not need to mention any names to suggest what material—the dying salesmen and the little Babylons that rise and fall—lies on hand for a novelist to-day.

GAVIN LAMBERT.

Memoirs

Hollywood D'hier et D'aujourd'hui, by Robert Florey. (Paris, Prisma Editions, 1949.)

ROBERT FLOREY is a minor enigma, very typical of the cinema. A Frenchman, born in 1900, he became a friend of René Clair (who contributes a genial preface to this book) in the twenties; he went to Hollywood, became von Sternberg's assistant, made a number of semi *avant-garde* films including *The Love of Zero*, *Johann the Coffin-Maker* and *A Hollywood Extra*—on which he worked with the famous cameraman Gregg Toland—then a few commercial pictures. He returned to France about 1930, and directed *Le Blanc et le Noir* (written by Guitry) which was Raimu's first film. After a picture apiece in Germany and Spain, he went back to Hollywood and settled down, apparently, to make anything that was offered to him. This included *Cocoanuts*, the first Marx Brothers film, the script of the first *Frankenstein*, a version of *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *Ex-Lady* (Bette Davis' first "vehicle"), thrillers, musicals, tear-jerkers. Nor did he draw the line at "B" pictures: he launched the *Boston Blackie* series. He became (and remains) a close friend of Chaplin, and two years ago we saw his name on the credit titles of *Monsieur Verdoux*, as associate director. Since then he has made a *Tarzan* picture, and an obediently arty, brutal thriller called *The Crooked Way* (notable for some of the most alarming close-ups of Sonny Tufts on celluloid).

His book, *Hollywood d'hier et d'aujourd'hui*, throws little light on his motives, or lack of them; it displays an immense affection for the cinema, and for nearly everyone connected with it. The names of almost every Hollywood director and player of any consequence during the last thirty years are mentioned in it, always amicably. It is a long chronicle of experiences and adventures—Florey arrived in Hollywood in its earliest, wildest days—packed with trivial but not uninteresting anecdotes, and containing towards the end an informal and illuminating account of working with Chaplin. An agreeable book to look into, with many fascinating illustrations, ranging from Mack Sennett to *Verdoux*, by way of Fairbanks, Valentino, Sessue Hayakawa, Pola Negri, Dietrich, Lon Chaney and Orson Welles.

ADAM HELMER

Le Cinema—Par Ceux Qui Le Font.
Denis Marion, *Editor*. (Paris, Fayard.)
1949.

As a general introduction to the various jobs, artistic, technical and commercial, that are concerned in the production and exploitation of a modern film, this book compares favourably with its several French, English and American predecessors. It is in no respect a textbook for either students or professionals, neither will it satisfy the fan. Its main appeal should be to the intelligent film-goer who wishes to know something of the mechanism of an industry which manages variously to win his admiration and earn his scorn. For those who are already acquainted with such matters (or with the other books on the subject written by personalities of the film world) the main interest of the present volume will be in the identity and views of the contributors themselves and perhaps in comparing them with those of other experts who have committed themselves to paper at one time or another. While contributions vary considerably in quality and interest, most of them succeed in conveying the atmosphere, if not the essence, of their particular sphere of activity. Sometimes a brief historical background is given and often a narrative is enlivened by personal anecdotes and reminiscences. It is a pity that controversial subjects and new developments ("le plateau nu", block-booking and tele-cinema, for example) have been avoided, since without them the picture is incomplete and the film industry appears to be static and unchanging rather than in a state of flux and strife.

The book is divided into three parts: *Historique*, *La Réalisation* and *La Projection*. The first consists of three essays on the origins of the cinema, the silent film and the sound film, by Georges Sadoul, Pierre Scize and Georges Charensol respectively. The second part, which forms the bulk of the text, deals with life and work within the studio. Jean Delannoy, Charles Spaak, Edwige Feuillère, Léon Barsacq and Georges van Parys are among the sixteen contributors here. The last part covers censorship (Georges Ruisman), distribution and exhibition, and also contains an account of the French Ciné-Club movement by Jeander and an essay on film criticism by Denis Marion, who also compiled and edited the book. The illustrations are commonplace and poorly reproduced.

COLIN BORLAND.

TECHNICAL BOOKS

How to Direct as an Amateur. Tony Rose. (Focal Press.) 6s.

No book can tell the amateur how to make a masterpiece: it is achievement enough to succeed in showing him how to make a good average film, and Tony Rose's careful, detailed study does just that. He rightly stresses the amateur's advantage over the professional in having the freedom to film what he likes, and emphasises the importance of pre-selecting one's audience and telling the story in visual terms. With some nice, dry humour, each phase of film-making is explained in some detail, from the original idea to the first showing. Along the route we find such diverse subjects as selecting the unit, public relations, preserving continuity, conveying mood, problem players and the use of "business", as well as a good number of examples from the scripts of his own films,

Full Circle and *Leave it to Me*, and many lucid illustrations. One might make some small criticisms: the confusing use of italics; the "exit bottom—enter top" rule (page 82) does not always work out (overhead shots); there is not enough emphasis, perhaps, on the importance of good composition nor on the choice of a really worth-while subject (Grierson, for instance, thinks amateur films could play a much greater part in the public information services), but, on the whole, here is a book which should help the budding amateur director to avoid a number of all-too-common pitfalls and start half-way up upon the ladder of success.

WALTER LASSALLY.

The Motion Picture Theater—Planning—Upkeep, edited by Helen M. Stote. (New York, Society of Motion Picture Engineers, 1948.)

Early in 1947 the American Society of Motion Picture Engineers felt that a post-war wave of cinema construction and modernisation was at hand. Accordingly, at their 62nd Semi-annual Convention held in New York in October, 1947, papers were read to members of the Society by experts in all phases of modern "theater engineering," discussions were held and conclusions were reached. All this is now recorded in this book, admirably edited by Helen M. Stote.

The papers, of which there are 38, cover the ground very thoroughly. There are sections on physical construction, auditorium design, ventilation and air-conditioning, acoustics, lighting and floor covering. A particularly interesting paper deals with a comparatively new type of cinema—the drive-in or open-air cinema. The book concludes with a section on the history and development of television up to 1947, about half of which is devoted to a description, by the late A. G. D. West, of theatre television in England.

This book is intended chiefly for those interested professionally or technically in the construction and maintenance of cinemas. Thorough and practical, it is also well and fully illustrated.

J. S. FAIRFAX-JONES

The Use of Training Films in Department and Specialty Stores, by Harry M. Hague (Boston, 1948); **The Film in Industrial Safety Training**, by Paul R. Ignatius (Boston, 1949). (Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University.)

These are the first two studies of a project whose purpose is to examine the use of films and other training aids in American industry. Questionnaires and interviews were used to obtain the opinions of management personnel directly responsible for training, whose views provide the basis for the reports. In both studies the recommendations made for the better use of films might be of interest to British industrialists. The report on safety training makes a careful analysis of the types of appeal employed in safety films, and devotes a chapter to the problems of film production.

The only criterion for the effectiveness of training films is the extent to which they improve performance. This is often very difficult to determine, even in the case of sales records and accident rates, both of which, though measurable, are subject to large fluctuations for many reasons. In consequence very little experimental evidence is quoted in

either study. It would seem that generally films alone cannot be expected to have much influence on training. Only when films become one element in a well-devised training programme are valuable results likely to be obtained. That conclusion is implied in these studies, though not explicitly stated.

STANLEY OREANU

MISCELLANIES

Film and Theatre Today—The European Scene, edited by J. Clifford King and Gavin Lambert. (Saturn Press, 1949), 2s. 6d.

With this issue, *Theatre Today* and *Film Today* are amalgamated. The film section includes discerning accounts of new developments in the Italian cinema, by H. H. Wollenberg, of new films in Germany, by Hans Hill, of American directors (Hawks, Dmytryk and Vincent Sherman) recently in Britain, by Irving Silas, of the career of Ealing Studios, by Lindsay Anderson, and analyses of the independent frame and other techniques, by Walter Lassally. There are many interesting illustrations.

Film Fan's Bedside Book, No. 2. (Coordination—Press and Publicity—Ltd., 1949), 8s. 6d.

Although the second issue of the *Film Fan's Bedside Book* costs the same as its predecessor, it is this year bound in cloth instead of cardboard. Again profusely illustrated, it contains many and various items, including, over and above those designed for a purely fan public, articles such as *The Science of Sound*, by B. C. Sewell, *The Future of Television*, by H. G. Chevalier, *Films You Never See in the Cinema*, by Ernest Lindgren, and Sir Ralph Richardson's *Epilogue*.

Educational Film Year Book, 1949-50
Handbook of the Scottish Educational Film Association. (Scottish Educational Film Association, 1949), 2s. 6d.

This is the first issue of the *Year Book* since 1938 and its reappearance will, no doubt, be welcomed by those engaged on any work which involves the use of visual aids. Following the practice of the pre-war issues, this volume combines theory with regard to the use of visual aids with concrete information about apparatus and materials.

M. E. COHEN

We have received copies of the following publications:—

BLAKESTON, Oswald. "Ik Werk Bij de Film." (Bloemendaal, N. V. Focus, 1949.)

HANSELL, Peter. "35 mm. Filmstrip Technique." (Ilford, 1949). 7s. 6d.

HILL, Cecil A. "Filmstrip Projection." (Fountain Press, 1949). 5s.

JENKINS, Norman. "How to Project Sub-standard Films." (Focal Press, 1949). 6s.

LEE, Norman. "Log of a Film Director." (Quality Press, 1949). 12s. 6d.

NOBLE, Peter, ed. "The British Film Year-book, 1949-50." (Skelton Robinson, 1949). 21s.

NORTH, Sterling. "So Dear to My Heart." (Odham's, 1949). 7s. 6d.

"Penguin Film Review, 9." (Penguin Books, 1949). 1s. 6d.

TRUBY, Jeffrey, and DOREY, L. W. "Visual Aid Year Book, 1949." (*Daily Mail School-Aid Department*, 1949). 3s. 6d.

WHITE, T. A. Blanco "Copyright." (Stevens, 1949). 4s.

Supplements

THE LAND OF POG

Quentin Dobson

IN THE EARLY DAYS of the Documentary Film, if one may believe the veterans who nostalgically recall their achievements in bars, realism or reality was the thing. Sickened with the synthetic world of contemporary cinema—a world where the glamour girl was beginning to emerge from the embers of the burnt-out vamp, where people lived in *de luxe* apartments and drove expensive cars—an Angela Thirkell-like Land of Never-Never, where the working classes were either comic or criminal—some bold pioneers set out to tell the truth. They decided to put the real world—the world where people work during most of their conscious hours—on the screen. Not content with being reporters, they were evangelists as well. In the brave days of the 'thirties, life around us divided itself into convenient categories. The Leftist or the Progressive found it easy to choose sides, to separate black from white. And the early documentaries came down heavily in favour of all that was bright and new and humanitarian, whether it was free milk for schoolchildren, slum clearance or jobs for the unemployed.

"Whither is fled the visionary gleam, where is it now, the beauty and the dream?" What has sprung up on those solid foundations which looked so promising ten years ago? Certainly not all that one might have hoped.

Let us take the reporting side to begin with. It used to be fashionable to decry Hollywood at all costs, for its superficiality and glitter. Yet today you will find more resemblance to real life in three out of four Hollywood features than in the average British documentary. Just as writers between Dickens and Shaw made all their Cockney characters speak in an obsolete and unreal *patois* based on Sam Weller (vide Preface to *Pygmalion*), so the documentarists of today seem prepared to assume that reality is achieved by a pre-war formula. They have created a world which is roughly the complement of the early celluloid paradise. It is a world of collarless men and dirty machinery. In this world—The Land of Pog, as it has been named—lest readers should charitably remark that this title is the only original part of the article, I must assure them that it is not my own—the upper and middle classes, to give them their old, meaningless names for the sake of convenience, scarcely exist except as symbols of reaction or, alternatively, outstanding examples of unusual enlightenment. And the workers! They are so weighed down by their leaden haloes that they would not be able to hold their heads up in Motherwell or Gateshead or Smethwick even if they dared venture there. Purged of all humanity, humourless save for the occasional prim pleasantry, their only function is to sugar the pill ("human interest", "story treatment") and carry the commentary, or act as mouthpieces for the sponsoring Ministry. Too often their dialogue is stilted, didactic and wooden. Far and wide, outside the film industry, "Documentary Dialogue" has

rightly, if unfortunately, become the target for malicious wit. Pogland, in short, has become a travesty of Britain today. In Rome, not long ago, I was asked why all the characters in British documentary were so ugly—so much uglier than the British in general. Apparently, when a certain industrial document, much praised over here, was exhibited to Latin audiences, it was howled off the screen: only when the actors—the coating of the pill—had been cut right out, leaving a straight commentary treatment of industrial processes, was it fit for exhibition. And it is in the portrayal of processes—of machinery and technique—that today's documentarists excel: the human machine either defeats portrayal or fails to excite interest.

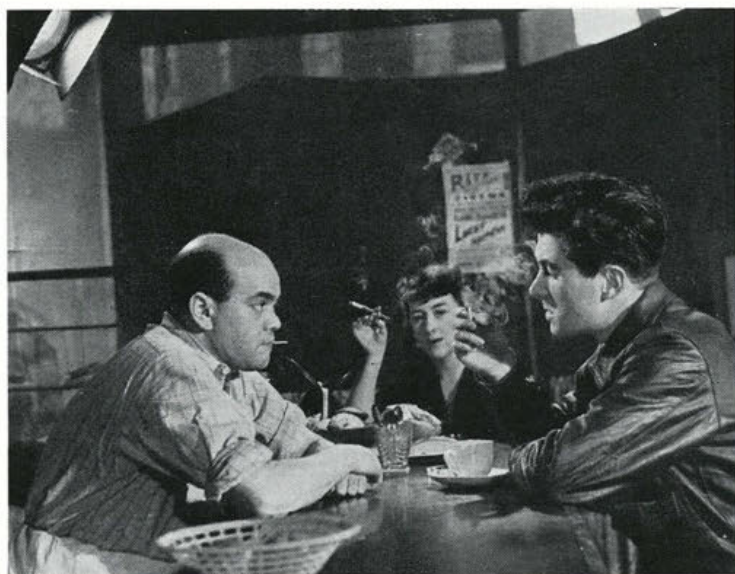
And now for the missionary zeal. It is the proud (and frequently-voiced) boast of the Early Documentarists that not only did they fulfil a social purpose by putting across the message which was the *raison d'être* of the film, but in many cases they went so much further that they influenced the policy of their sponsors. Taking this claim for what it is worth—I leave it to an older generation to examine, qualify, justify or refute it in the light of experience—I find it hard to believe that any of my contemporaries could make a similar claim. Of course, it is possible that sponsors have become tougher—repeated inoculations from the time of Grierson onwards must have engendered a certain immunity to the individualism of film-makers. And having once been compelled, despite protests, to write a commentary on the work of the National Coal Board without mentioning the dangerously tendentious word "nationalisation", I must confess for my own part to a certain scepticism when it comes to the malleability of sponsors and their middlemen. But that is only a question of degree: nowadays it is hard to believe that any film-maker is going to *want* to improve his views on any but technical problems. Does this matter? In one most important respect it does. It is the function of the documentary film to put across an idea. Too often film-makers regard ideas as an unfortunate stumbling-block in an otherwise good racket: the delightful abstraction of pans, tracks, middle, long and close shots must be spoilt to make a concession to the man who foots the bill, and an idea must be injected.

To put it mildly, this is the wrong way round, and possibly the frequent failure of today's films to *say* anything arises from the makers' impatience with the world of ideas and preoccupation with technique.

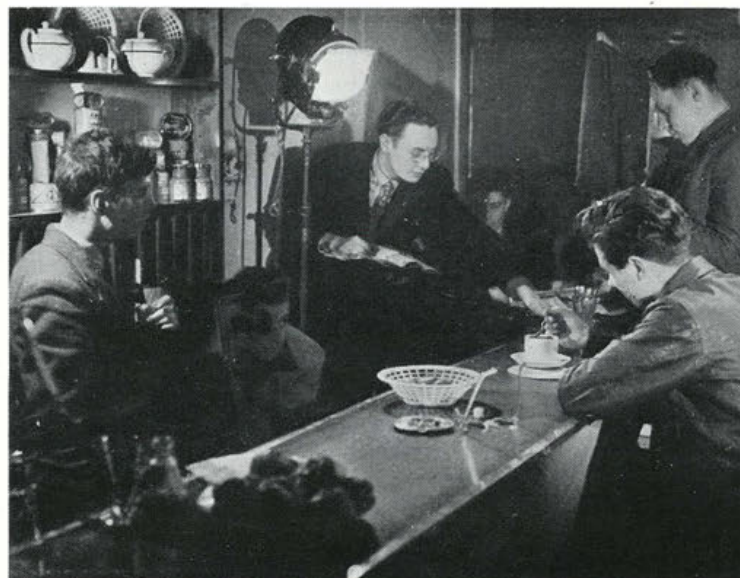
Is there a road out of the Land of Pog? Having taught a serious lesson to the feature film industry, is the Documentary Movement to fizzle quietly out in a welter of decadent esotericism? There is a strong danger that it will, unless documentarists turn outwards, preoccupy themselves less with the technicalities of presentation on the screen and more with the portrayal of living flesh and blood.

Amateur Activities : SATURDAY NIGHT

Saturday Night, which its makers are now completing, is a brave experiment: a 30-minute sound film, written and made by a group of young professionals in their spare time—shot mainly on Sundays, the only day of the week on which it has been possible to assemble the complete unit. The scriptwriter and director, Derek York, is professionally an assistant cutter; the cameraman, Walter Lassally, a focus operator working recently on Night and the City. Much of the film has been done on various London locations, and the interiors shot in actual rooms or cafés. A member of the unit here tells something of its history and its hopes for the future.



The café scene in "Saturday Night." Maurice Harrison, Beryl Lund, Bryan Forbes.



The Screencraft unit filming the same scene: Walter Lassally, cameraman (left), Derek York, director (centre).

SCREENCRAFT PRODUCTIONS was formed in June, 1948, by Derek York and Walter Lassally, who had then just completed *Smith, Our Friend*, a 16 mm. silent short dealing with post-war housing conditions and the squatters' incident, now being distributed by the Central Booking Agency of the British Film Institute. The new unit consists mainly of young professionals who are working, crises permitting, in one or other of the documentary units or feature film studios. The unit's constitution states that they are to work on a spare-time, non-profit basis "to explore the creative possibilities of the cinema medium for the expression of ideas to the exclusion of commercial motives". It was agreed to avoid stories that were either typical of the best amateur film scripts or acceptable to the average commercial company, as it was desired to concentrate on subjects which, by their nature, could not find an outlet through either of these two channels. Further, the unit decided that the stories filmed must be socially conscious, i.e., must put across an idea and an outlook on life outside their actual plots.

Bearing these principles in mind, a story by Derek York, *Saturday Night*, was selected for filming first. Over a period of months equipment was borrowed, hired and made. Finally, in December, 1948, the first scenes of this 30-minute sound film were shot. The cast is headed by Bryan Forbes, who is partnered by an unknown actress, Irene Bell, and supported mainly by players from Unity Theatre.

No member of the unit or cast is paid, nor will they take a share of the profits, if any, which would be ploughed back into the next production. The finance for the film, which is expected to cost about £350, was found co-operatively within the unit. Practically the only item of expenditure paid for at normal rates is the processing, everything else being obtained free or at reduced rates, through the willing co-operation of a number of sympathetic people and firms, including the British Film Institute, which loans its library for meetings and its theatre for rushes. All the shooting takes place in natural locations, both indoor and outdoor, and only a third of the films utilises dialogue, the rest being mainly visual. Although it was originally intended to shoot every Sunday, this could not be carried through, and many difficulties, especially the co-ordination of all the freely rendered services, have meant an extremely extended and elastic shooting schedule, although every inch of the film was pre-planned in the script stage and hardly any alterations have been made since. Nevertheless, the film is now complete but for one sequence and the sound recording.

Although the film was shot on standard 35 mm. stock, no distribution has yet been sought, in order to have complete freedom in the making of this short story commenting—through the events of a single evening which involve a number of characters, notably a young demobbed soldier and a girl—on the apathy of the present-day world.

FINANCE:

WHERE ARE THE DOLLARS?—I

Richard Griffith

PERHAPS THIS ARTICLE might better be titled *Great Expectations*, or *Where are the Dollars?* For more than five years, patriotic British film-makers have spent lavishly and laboured hard to fashion films which could gain ready acceptance in the American market, hoping to garner returns commensurate with the time and money expended. To judge from comment in the London press (and in that part of the American press which is sympathetic to British problems) these expectations have been largely disappointed. Editorial opinion appears dissatisfied with the American earnings of British films. And it appears to be looking for someone to blame.

There are many scapegoats to hand. A favourite is the supposed conspiracy among Hollywood magnates to exclude British films from U.S. theatres. Second only to that in popularity is the belief that British producers, and particularly Mr. Rank, have become the prisoners of the American companies; that, in coming to terms with the U.S. distribution apparatus, they have somehow sold their birthright for a (small) mess of pottage. And thirdly, there is the American moviegoing public itself which, so help me, I have heard roundly castigated for its refusal to take to its bosom these latest cultural products of the motherland from whom we have inherited our culture.

Let us consider these chimeras (for such I believe them to be) one by one. There is, of course, some substance in the third charge. The dollars remain in the pockets of American moviegoers who persist in preferring the native product to the exotic. Possibly this is blameworthy, as one commentator flatly states. But placing the blame in this quarter is unlikely to alter the situation. In the words of a veteran New York showman, "When you're cultivating an export market, the only thing that matters is to give the market what it wants". To this statement and its implications we shall return later. First, I should like to examine the charge of conspiracy levelled at the American companies, and the charge of bungling made against the British studios and their U.S. assigns.

The belief that Hollywood makes a concerted effort to exclude British films from the U.S. market seems to be based, in part, on an exaggerated estimate of the share of that market which Britain could possibly be expected to reach. The average yearly output of the eight major Hollywood companies is between forty and fifty pictures each. It is a rare year indeed when the United States receives from England as many as forty films *from all producers combined*. This fact defines the status of the British industry in the United States as that of a *ninth* major company. As such, its share of the total market is by no means disproportionately small.

But, it has been objected, though the British share of the market may not be the smallest, it is the poorest. English films must woo and win the independent theatres one by one; they have difficulty gaining access to the big theatre circuits where the big money lies. To a degree this

is true, but it is not a conspiratorial truth. It simply highlights the predicament of anyone, anywhere, who tried to break the mould into which the movie business settled once its pioneering days were over and its plant was built. For the past quarter century, Hollywood companies have been interested in two things: selling their annual production programs and operating their chains of theatres at a profit. I have not space to go into such matters as the fact that, to many companies, their real estate (wholly or partially owned chains of theatres) represents a more profitable investment than their entire production program. This situation may be radically altered by the recent judicial decree commanding divorcement of the theatres from the studios. To feed any "outside" picture into this closed system of production, distribution and exhibition is likely to embarrass successful operation of the system itself, and therefore tends to be avoided. But to this rule there is a dramatic exception. Any film, no matter what its source, which is on the face of it a self-selling, self-exploiting, self-liquidating investment will be bought by any of the big circuits—they will, in fact, fight over it. The many times they have done just that seems conclusive proof of their notorious and chronic inability to take concerted action for any purpose whatever, much less a conspiratorial one. But the obverse of this is that *unless* a picture is so obvious and natural a hit, American mass-distribution through the big companies will be difficult to obtain and, if obtained, *may return little or no profit to the producer*; it may even lose him money. This, to me, is the key to the situation, the *mene, mene, tekel* which most British studios have yet to get by heart.

It is a hard lesson to learn. American release through a major company, with all the attendant hoopla, cannot but be the glittering goal of every ambitious producer. And every man thinks his own film is the one which will break the shibboleths. But the history of the past two decades demonstrates that more often it is the producer who gets broken—or goes broke. The reasons why some British studios continue to ignore these economic object-lessons are connected with many things—national pride, the necessity to earn dollars, and, not least, commitments to financiers involving big talk about the endless potential of the American market. But mostly they have their source in the illusion that this time it will be different. It never has been different, and recent experiences indicate that it won't be until English producers attempt to equate their production policy with the realities of the market they are trying to capture. They could make no better start, it seems to me, than to study the occasions on which British films *have* been successful in the United States, and to sort out the factors underlying these sporadic, though I hope, increasing, successes.

The first success, after the fabled days of Korda's *Henry VIII*, was misleading, for it was based on temporary conditions created by the war and was destined to vanish

with it. From 1939 to 1941 America saw practically no British films; Gaumont-British had disappeared and Korda had transferred most of his operations to Hollywood. But at the end of 1941, the redoubtable Sidney Bernstein resigned his chairmanship of the Granada theatre chain, came to the United States, and induced the eight major companies to join what became known as the Rota System. By the terms of this agreement, each of the majors undertook to distribute at least one British feature and two shorts per year. The Rota System worked surprisingly well, and Tom Baird, the chief implement if not the actual author of the scheme, notes that "excellent distribution on a normal basis was secured". But it is doubtful if the majors would have agreed to Bernstein's proposals if they had not had an eye on possible quids-pro-quo in relation to the post-war British market for Hollywood films. It is doubtful if U.S. audiences would have responded so well to the films thus put before them had it not been for the temporary feeling of emotional unity which the war had created between Americans and Englishmen. It is above all doubtful if "excellent distribution" would have been achieved were it not for the activities of Baird himself.

The war ended. To the applause of Lord Halifax, the American companies took their bows for "co-operating" with Britain—and bowed out of the Rota System. Meanwhile, bigger things were afoot.

I need not recapitulate the saga of J. Arthur Rank's bestriding of the narrow world of British films. By the late war years it was evident that his expensive films could not return their cost unless they matched the box office record of Hollywood pictures in the U.S. as well as in England. When, in 1946 and 1947, Rank released *Colonel Blimp*, *Caesar and Cleopatra* and *Henry V* through United Artists, it seemed that he was about to repeat the costly gambit of Korda who, in the thirties, bought into United Artists only to find that, since this company owned no theatres, he had gained nothing thereby. But Rank saw further than that. He well understood that he must either establish his own exchanges and build or buy his own theatres, or ally himself with a powerful distribution organization already firmly entrenched in the field. Prudently he chose the latter.

By this system, almost unique in film history, most of the big Rank productions are released here by Universal-International, the remaining top-flight films being distributed by Eagle-Lion. All other Rank productions are relegated to Prestige Pictures, a small distributing unit subsidiary to Universal. U.S. observers were at first greatly puzzled by Rank's choice of Universal-International as the releasing channel for his major efforts. Universal owns some few theatres, but its holdings are by no means comparable to the chains controlled by Paramount, 20th Century-Fox, Warners, RKO, or Loew's Inc. (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer). Possibly Rank had no choice. More probable is the conjecture that, as between making a deal with a big chain or creating a new system devoted to his interests, he chose the latter. Rank owns the biggest single block of Universal stock and has three members, including himself, on its board of directors, dating back to his refinancing of the company in 1937, when it was on the verge of bankruptcy.

The system was in operation by the end of 1946. It was at first the general impression here that it constituted a system of preferences. It was thought that Rank's entire product was first submitted to Universal, which selected the pictures it chose to distribute, then to Eagle-Lion,

which in turn made its choice, the remainder being sent on to Prestige for what distribution could be obtained by this skeleton unit. Surprisingly, it soon became apparent that films were allocated to Eagle-Lion without first being submitted to Universal, others sent straight to Prestige. While the two big companies have the right to refuse pictures offered them, they have no right of choice from the entire product. This means that the allocation of a film to Universal rather than to Eagle-Lion, or to Prestige rather than to the larger distributors, indicates that it is the best judgement of the Rank organization in London that the chosen instrument will achieve better distribution for the film in question than either of the two other agencies available. It is against this background that we may now estimate how good the best judgement of Rank and his associates has been.

To do so, we must first return to the fate of the three Rank super-productions released through United Artists before the Universal-Eagle-Lion-Prestige tie-up was arranged. *Colonel Blimp* and *Caesar and Cleopatra* were Technicolor films obviously relying on the American market to recoup a major portion of their costs. Each was handled by United Artists exactly as the company would treat one of its own productions. This means that at least 350 Technicolor prints of each film had to be imported from England at a cost of more than 175,000 dollars. A like amount would normally be spent on advertising and publicity, transportation and other ordinary distribution costs such as are charged against the gross rentals of every film before any profit can be returned to the producer. The total costs of distributing each of these expensive films would therefore be something like 350,000 dollars apiece. Even to pay these costs, a picture must attain at least seven thousand bookings. The actual net and gross of *Blimp* and *Caesar* are not available (I assume it is well-known in England that it is not the policy of the Rank organization to make such figures public). What happened is nevertheless pretty clear. *Colonel Blimp* was an unmitigated disaster. Too long for the ordinary double-feature program, it was drastically cut by United Artists, thus alienating the intelligentsia who were eager to see it because of the warm critical praise given the original version. In aiming at the mass market, United Artists had lost the only audience the film could possibly have pleased, and got itself into legal trouble as well; the Federal Trade Commission acted to restrain the company from exhibiting the abbreviated as though it were the complete version. I much doubt that *Blimp* achieved a thousand bookings here. *Caesar and Cleopatra* fared much better—or seemed to. United Artists, backed to the hilt by Rank's men, put on a demoniac selling campaign which got it into 10,000 theatres. This is, on the face of it, a very respectable record equal to that achieved by the average "A" picture from Hollywood. But *Caesar* was sold to theatres on percentage of the take, and on that basis its returns were disappointing indeed. The picture opened "big" at every theatre—and returns dropped like a falling barometer. American audiences, attracted by big names and big "production value", were repelled by the ossified DeMille spectacle which was all that was offered them, and told their neighbours not to bother. It is ironic indeed that "word-of-mouth" advertising, which proved to be the eventual salvation of British pictures in this country, should have sealed the doom of this first attempt to overawe U.S. moviegoers by lavish spending.

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